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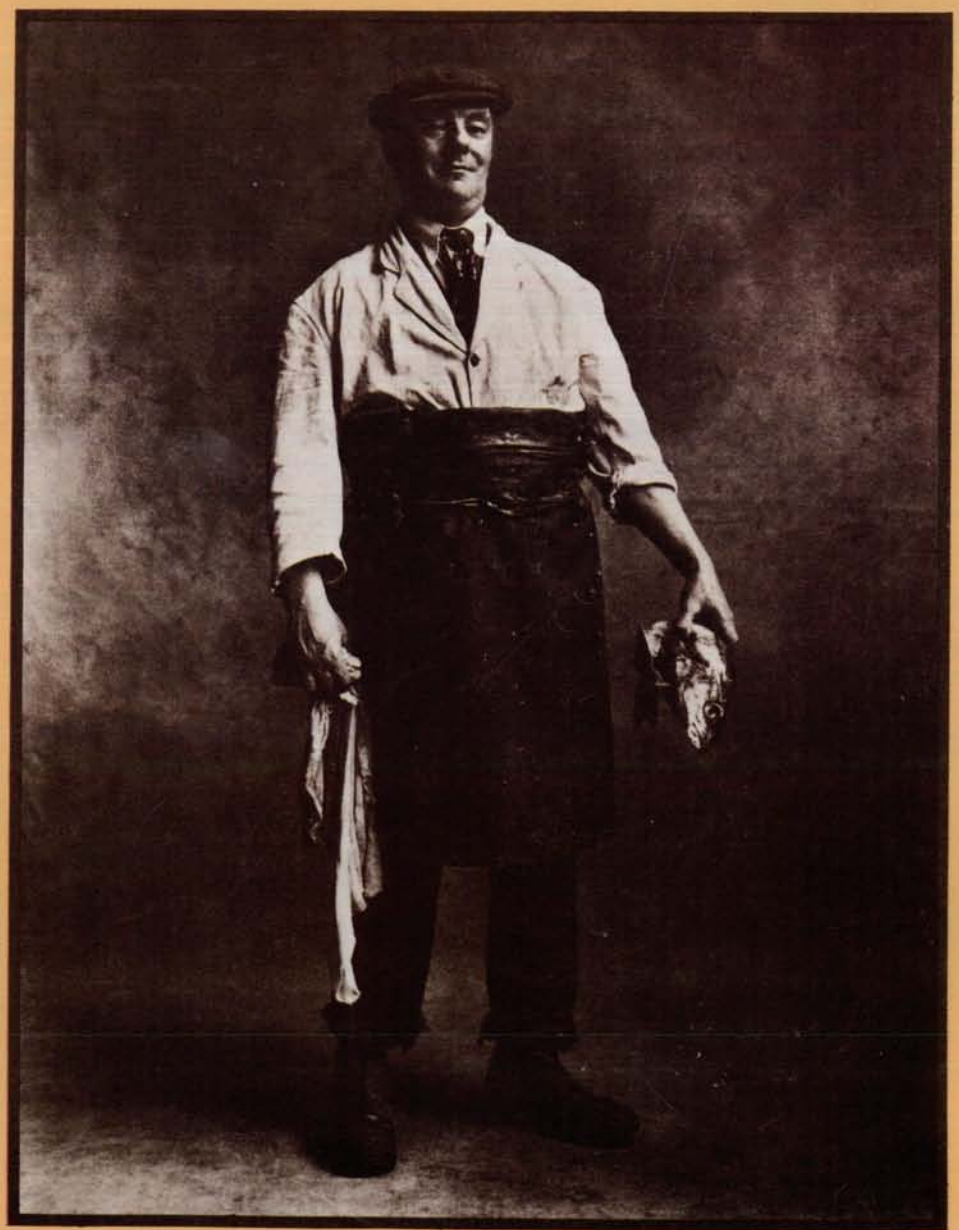

Darkroom Reading

Peter Bunnell • *Hilton Kramer* • *Irving Howe* • *John Canaday*

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TRB

from Washington ®
October 29, 1977

Terror

Susanne Albrecht betrayed her godfather with a bouquet of roses. "Here's Susanne," came the familiar voice over the intercom and the gate was opened. She entered with her roses and two members of the West German terrorist group and they gunned down Jurgen Ponto, chairman of the Dresden Bank, her father's friend.

She believed in a Cause, of course. So did the two men and two women who hijacked the Lufthansa jetliner last week, flew to Somalia, murdered the kneeling pilot, threatened the 86 passengers and crew and finally were overwhelmed by the German commando team. The commandos blew the door off the jet with a bomb that blinded like a lightning flash and stunned like a thunder clap and gave just the gasp of time needed for rescue.

Susanne Albrecht was well-educated, upper-class, highly-motivated and "sick of eating caviar," as she said. So she added one more crime to what's been going on in Germany and elsewhere. The Supreme judge of the Berlin high court was murdered; West Germany's chief public prosecutor was murdered; banker Ponto was murdered; industrialist Hans-Martin Schleyer was kidnapped and his guards murdered. This has been going on for 10 years.

Now comes the second part of it, in Germany and other countries. Terrorists are caught, tried and imprisoned and then, in order to release them, their reckless gangs undertake more spectacular terrorism, seizing innocent victims and demanding the release of the prisoners. Mostly they lose, sometimes they win: Israel defeated air terror at Entebbe; Dutch marines rescued a hijacked train; now German commandos have achieved another thrilling rescue (and probably saved Helmut Schmidt's government). But two years ago Germany freed five terrorists to rescue a kidnapped politician, and last week Japanese terrorists made blackmail pay; Tokyo liberated six jailed terrorists, threw in six million dollars in ransom and bought off 156 passengers whose lives were at stake. The terrorists disappeared into the silence of Algiers. Their victory encourages every other outrage, of course.

What is society going to do about events like these which leave it seething with helpless fury? The question is still unanswered even though the Somalia rescue was successful. Theoretically, of course, we shouldn't pay ransom. We know intellectually that it will simply produce more crimes. When the life of only one man was at stake (Schleyer) a West German poll showed 60 percent against yielding to terrorist demands, only 22 percent for it. But when the dreadful stakes were the women and children on the Lufthansa jetliner, a later poll showed a tie, 42 percent to 42 percent. What a damnable choice to be confronted with, to be sure, in this elegant modern age!

Certain things begin to stand out. There is no doubt any longer that there always will be an absolutist faction which holds individual life in contempt, which justifies ends over means, which clutches at martyrdom for no matter how tawdry a cause. There always will be a Susanne Albrecht with her roses.

Another point: the world has grown so small now that nations almost must cooperate in these matters in spite of themselves. Moscow is as much opposed to hijacking as Washington. There has been no hijacking from the US to Cuba since Castro made a no-landing agreement. Surely there are sanctions that can be taken against nations which accept air pirates or which don't install adequate electronic security checks, tedious and irritating as they are.

We know more, too, about the psychology of terrorists; that a quite close relationship can grow up between them and the passengers they have abducted; that the enforced intimacy of the adventure makes them take a human interest, after all, in the victims who seemed merely pawns at first. Weariness can also produce a letdown. The government that bargains with them should stretch matters out; employ every circumstance as a basis of further negotiations; put back, if possible, the deadline originally imposed. The West German government let two deadlines go by without capitulating.

It begins to look, too, as though nations must organize specialized strike

(continued on page 38)

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

October 29, 1977

The Rewards of Moderation

Desperate men rule South Africa. Before dawn last Wednesday they arrested many of the nation's leading black journalists, lawyers, student leaders and educators. Then they closed South Africa's two large black newspapers and banned most major black organizations. This is a disaster for the country's black majority. It is also the surest act of self-destruction so far by the white regime of Prime Minister John Vorster. With this step, the white government has silenced most of the dwindling voices of moderation which might have helped to stop South Africa's downward slide toward all-out racial confrontation.

The government crackdown may have been triggered by the demands of black journalists and white liberals for an explanation for the death of Steven Biko last month in a government security prison. South Africa's minister of justice, James T. Kruger, told the country over national television that Biko, an imprisoned black activist with a large following among the country's black youth, had died of starvation. This did not wash with Biko's family and friends, who saw no evidence of emaciation when they viewed his body at the morgue, but did see indications of a beating.

The pressure on the government to provide the facts about Steven Biko's death has been led by *The World* of Johannesburg and its editor, Percy Qoboza. This newspaper, owned by white liberals, has a circulation of 160,000, but a readership of many times that number, in the black township of Soweto. Qoboza and *The World* also have been a vital source of information for foreign journalists.

The security police shut down *The World* and its counterpart, *The Weekend World*, the first major newspapers to be closed by the government. And they "detained" Qoboza. According to an eye witness, "They dragged him away as if he had killed somebody." The government also "banned" (what amounts to house arrest) a white journalist, Donald Woods. Woods is editor of *The Daily Dispatch* of East London in Cape Province, and the government's most strenuous critic among journalists writing for the white community. Thus freedom of the press—that touch of civilization which South Africans pointed to smugly as distinguishing them from the rest of the continent—has died as suddenly and violently as Steven Biko, and of the same cause.

In the newspeak of Kruger, the police minister, *The World* had engaged in "unfair and malicious" coverage of Biko's death. "The government," Kruger said, "is determined to ensure that the peaceful coexistence of peoples in South Africa is not disturbed by a small group of anarchists."

Well, what sort of "anarchist" is Percy Qoboza?

When he came to the United States in September 1975 to begin a nine-month Nieman fellowship at Harvard, he brought a reputation as a moderate whose life had been a painful struggle to maintain that tricky balance. "One has to make a choice," he wrote that year, "whether to be outspoken and go to jail where you'll be silenced, or to take a milder platform so you can keep working. . . . The whites are in South Africa to stay—we've got to devise some way by which we can all work together."

Qoboza returned to South Africa in June 1976, three weeks before last year's wave of black protests against apartheid followed by bloody police reprisals and rioting. South African journalists noticed a new, tougher tone in *The World*'s coverage, as Qoboza tested the press freedom permitted black journalists under the government's censorship and security laws. During the rest of the year, the government arrested seven of *The World*'s staff members. It released some after a day's questioning but held others without trial. The final edition of *The World* this week carried an editorial demanding the release of three *World* reporters who have been imprisoned for as long as seven months.

Qoboza's turn came on December 14, 1976, after *The World* had published an interview with Khotso Seatlholo, president of the Soweto Students Representative Council, who was sought by police. Soweto's students had been an important force in the previous summer's protests. Qoboza woke up to the sound of a motor idling in the street below his bedroom window. It was about three in the morning. He was dragged away for eight hours of questioning about the whereabouts of these student leaders, which he did not reveal.

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Qoboza was released that day. The protest of US and British officials probably were partly responsible. His wife Anne had warned the police before they took him away, "Don't tell me that my husband committed suicide."

Recently, Qoboza was personally reprimanded by Prime Minister Vorster and Kruger for articles they considered inflammatory. Keep it up, they said, and we will close the paper.

By August, *The World* was telling its readers that black majority rule was inevitable. It said regarding the white government, "We appeal to their instincts for survival. We say to the government and the whites in general, your choice is simple: Either abandon all your privileges now and submit yourself to majority rule in a nonracial society or face certain destruction in the future." The distinction between treason and prophecy is a delicate one, to be sure. Qoboza happens to be a nonviolent man who prays that the confrontation may be avoided. He has seen the unrestrained violence of the security police and watched the white civilians sticking handguns into their purses and coat pockets. A husband and father of five children, he has no illusion about the proportion of casualities if full-scale violence breaks out between blacks and whites.

Through *The World*, Qoboza has tried to force whites and blacks to look at the Armageddon that lies ahead if South Africa continues on its present course. He has written:

"I have not to date come across any responsible black leader who has advanced the theory that whites are expendable and must be thrown into the sea. We have, on the contrary, over the years emphasized that whites are South Africans and have the right to exist in a common fatherland; and that all of us, around the conference table, must devise a formula acceptable for future coexistence.

"Our country is full of noble black men who have been silenced under the security laws for advancing just these types of ideas. . . . Indeed all those with whom the government should be talking in the black community have been subjected to punitive actions. The danger is that the time may well come when the authorities are forced to talk to somebody, and there will be nobody to talk to. When that happens, our troubles will indeed have started."

Howell for Virginia

This is Henry Howell's third attempt to become governor of Virginia. This time it looks like he's going to win. That's good.

Henry Howell has done more to change the shape of Virginia politics by losing elections than any of his opponents ever did by winning. Becoming governor has been Howell's only political ambition. He's had a blueprint for the Old Dominion from the time he entered local politics in Norfolk as a squawky but sensible voice in the wilderness back in the days of massive resistance to school desegregation. Ever since, people have been either for 'im or against 'im—fervently. Members of the conservative Virginia political dynasties who opposed him then are against him still. They keep holding him off, but every time the election bell sounds for another go-round, Howell's back at' em again.There's never been enough punch left in the old Byrd Machine to put him away.

Howell once settled for part of a term as lieutenant governor. If you've ever been to a gathering of lieutenant governors you know that most were born to the job, which Henry Howell was not. But it was not a waste of time because the enforced idleness smoothed off some of the rough edges and his demeanor proved that Howell is not the antichrist that most of the state's establishment newspapers still depict him to be.

Last time out, Henry ran as an Independent and the Republicans anointed a Byrd Democrat to run against him, thereby producing the first honest ballot in recent Virginia history. Howell's opponent this time is a Republican with bona fide bloodlines by the name of John Dalton. Not to be unfair to Dalton, you understand, but he isn't likely to be much of a factor in the voting. Howell is the issue; nobody's very much for or against Dalton.

Campaigning with President Carter at his side, Howell is a dignified man in a three-piece suit who obviously has been drilled to tone things down. Howell's previous campaigns were heady, unpredictable combinations of populism and vaudeville. He was the first politician to run on the slogan, "Keep the Big Boys Honest." He probably is the only politician ever to spell out who and what that meant.

The candidate is still running against the banks and the utilities. The little jingle he sings on the steps of the Virginia Electric Power Company when Jimmy Carter is not around shows that beneath the mild manners and inside the vest, it's still Henry. We're for 'im.

White House Watch

At Jimmy's Place

Here is a summary of impressions picked up during a week spent in getting around the White House, talking with assistants at top and middle levels about the current spate of reports, speculation and evidence in some national polls to the effect that the President is in bad trouble with Congress and the public. Depending on who is talking or writing, the thrust of the reporting and comment in question is either that the President is

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Correspondence

Not amused

To the editors:
I read *The New Republic* because it is a journal of fact and opinion on important issues.

I do not save old issues so I do not know whether Maggie Scarf's story, "I Was a Hooker for the CIA" (*TNR*, Sept. 3) was clearly identified as a joke, but I do not think this is a joking matter.

Is Mrs. Scarf's retraction of the veracity of the article the real joke?

Perhaps the answer to this problem is for you to publish a bimonthly comic section, or would you rather we just question all of your stories, including TRB, White House Watch, etc.?

Mark E. Weinstein, MD
San Diego, California

To the editors:
This letter has reference to your recent note stating that Maggie Scarf's article, "I was a Hooker for the CIA" was a joke.

This is no joke for the families in the United States, Canada, Australia and England who have the surname "Hooker."

I hope you and all editors and reporters will appreciate that the *slang* use of the name Hooker as a substitute for prostitute is a very serious rather than a laughing matter.

I have four granddaughters whose future I have great hopes for and seriously object to them being labelled as prostitutes because their family name happens to be Hooker.

Edwin R. K. Hooker
"Twenty Twyford"
Islington, Ontario

In reply:
We sympathize with Mr. Hooker. The use of the term as slang for a prostitute, however, began with General Joseph Hooker (1814-1879) who, as commander of the Army of the Potomac during the civil war, was always attended by a camp of prostitutes who became known as "Hooker's Brigade."

The editors

Set-aside farms

To the editors:
This administration does indeed intend to establish an acreage set-aside for wheat, and, perhaps, other grains. However, to call such a decision "crazy" reflects a gross misunderstanding of what actually will be done ("Paying Farmers Not to Work," *TNR*, Sept. 17). *Unlike set-aside programs in the past, the new proposals include no cash payments of any sort to farmers for not producing.*

The decision to enter the set-aside program was not taken lightly. Due to two years of good harvests overseas and at home, the nation is faced with a massive surplus of over two billion bushels. Export demand is dwindling and export competition is intensified as a result of the worldwide abundant harvests.

The farmers' economic ability to survive is endangered. Plunging farm income combined with rising taxes, increased production costs and a rapidly growing interest burden have placed the survival of many family farm operations in jeopardy. This poses a problem for the nation—not just farmers.

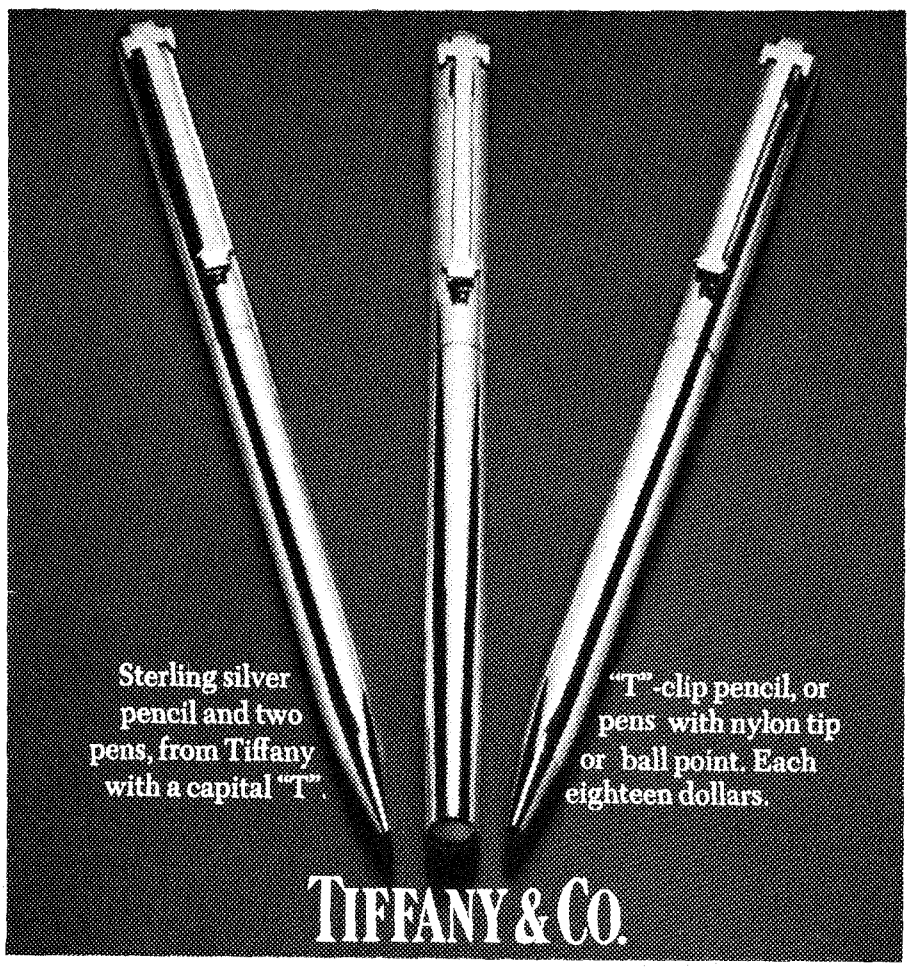
In tandem with the set-aside program is an adequate national grain reserve that will protect consumers with plentiful supplies without any inflation in food prices.

Finally, if we permit our present family farm system of agriculture to collapse—then, who will run our nation's farms? Will it be a few huge conglomerates and corporations or will it be a large number of independent family operators who, by virtue of their very numbers, are unable to manipulate either price or quality.

On this question, the Carter administration has no problem in determining where our national interest lies.

Robert H. Meyer
Assistant Secretary for Marketing Services
Department of Agriculture

(continued on page 38)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going to do something or had better do something about his working habits and about both the structure and the personnel of his senior staff, with particular reference to all those Georgians on it.

The central impressions are as follows. First, there is a lot more worry about the President's situation and prospects outside Jimmy Carter's White House than there is within that place and establishment. Second, Carter's closest associates see no sign whatever that he intends to make or senses a need to make any substantial changes either in his own working habits or in the structure and personnel of his senior staff. Third, most of what little worry, criticism and griping there is within the White House establishment is at the lower levels. Some of it reaches the middle or supervisory working level. Some but not much of it is shared at that level, and practically none of it reaches the top or senior staff or is shared by assistants at that level and imparted to the President. This is not to say that none of the worry and criticism is justified; only that it is having very little effect upon the President's senior people and, through them, upon him. Its principal effect is upon journalists who encounter bits and pieces of it and report it as gospel because it comes from "White House sources." Much of this reporting ignores a cardinal fact about the Carter White House, a fact that stems from and reflects Jimmy Carter's personality and character. He is a very closed and private person, more so in some respects than Richard Nixon was, and so much so that very few of his people see enough of him and have enough direct communication with him to speak with authority on any matter involving his views, purposes and intentions before they become final and public. Comparisons are dangerous, but this seems to me to be truer of the Carter White House than it was of the Nixon White House at its lowest point and of the Ford White House at any point.

The most authoritative accounts of Carter's view of his situation, in terms of prospects for his legislation and of his public standing, go like this: Sure, we're in trouble. We have problems. But the trouble and the problems grow out of the times, the nation's problems and the world's problems, not out of any defects in White House staff structure or personnel. All this talk about "too many Georgians" on the senior staff and in the small band of Carter intimates is ridiculous; the point is not whether people are from Georgia but whether they are capable people, and Carter's top-side Georgians (Press Secretary Jody Powell, assistant Hamilton Jordan, domestic adviser Stuart Eizenstat and Counsel Robert Lipshutz) are capable. So was the departed budget director Bert Lance, whatever the flaws in his banking past. Anyhow, whether ridiculous or not, it's irrelevant talk because the President needs and wants some people around him whom he knows, respects and is comfortable with, and he's not about to give up these Georgians. That is said with authority to apply to another Georgian, chief lobbyist Frank Moore, who rates lower than the others mentioned here on some assistants' capability scale and has been rumored to be on the verge of dismissal since he arrived in Washington with Carter. All the talk, including mine in this space, about Carter's need to designate a chief of staff who can bring some order into the operation, is said to be "simplistic stupidity." A related remark, not heard by me before, is that in any case the nearest thing Carter has to a staff chief, Hamilton Jordan, is a poor organizer and manager and wouldn't be a good staff chief, anyhow.

A common published criticism of Carter is that he's a detail freak, devotes far too much of his time and energies to poring over documents and absorbing petty facts that he should consign to other people and that even assistant departmental secretaries would delegate to clerks. Senior associates, Georgians included, agree with the criticism but say it's pointless. That's the way he was when he was governor of Georgia and it's the way he'll always be, so it's useless to complain about it to him or to others.

Another, more general criticism is that he's caused himself to appear as an inept loser by proposing too much legislation, too many domestic programs, too many foreign policy initiatives at one time. At one of his frequent sessions with visiting media executives on October 14, Carter addressed the point in these words: "So the multiplicity of these questions is almost overwhelming and I know that politically speaking it is not very good. If we have got ten different major things on the fire at one time and we win and finally finish the reorganization package, an urban program or a stimulus package, and we still have nine or so more that we are working on, it looks like things are all confused and we are not making any progress. . . . It would be much easier for me to deal in foreign affairs just with SALT and let the Middle East and Africa and everything else drift. But that is not my nature and I don't think it is in the best interest of the American people." One thing to be said of this and similar Carterisms is that it smacks of Richard Nixon at his whiney worst (remember all those "it would have been easy" lines?). But the most telling line in the foregoing passage is, *"that is not my nature."* Again and again, in talk around the White House about Carter and his ways, the inquirer hears it said that Jimmy Carter is Jimmy Carter and nothing is going to change him.

The most interesting and, I suspect, the most perceptive criticism of the Carter operation was also the most brutal. It will undoubtedly be resented and refuted at the top of the Carter staff. It began with and was summed up in this remark: "All the ideas come from Carter." Continuing and elaborating the point: Contrary to what might have been expected (and was expected by some Carter assistants) from this President and from any Democratic White House, this is not a place where fresh ideas are always bubbling up from

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working levels to the top, competing with each other for the President's attention and approval. That is partly because Carter promised so much and covered so much policy ground with his promises during his campaigns for nomination and election. It also arises from Carter's nature—"my nature," as he says. He prizes his own ideas, produces them in abundance, and clings fiercely to them once he's decided they are good. The result is that there is no demand from him to his top staff, and therefore from his top staff to lower levels, for fresh ideas, fresh approaches to problems. Finally: "Where there is no demand for fresh ideas, the supply dries up." A loyal Georgian, by assignment apart from but much involved with the immediate senior staff, visibly winced when this thought was put to him. On reflection, however, he acknowledged rather wanly that he'd been puzzled and troubled several times when what he considered to be innovative ideas died on their way up the staff ladder and got nowhere near the President.

A final reason why no major changes in either personnel or method are expected by the people consulted for this account is that there is no effective internal pressure for change within the White House establishment. Quite a few individuals at middle and low working levels share some of the doubts and criticisms, including the criticism described in the foregoing paragraph. But (one is told) nobody feels strongly enough about it all to do anything about it. Nobody is quitting, nobody is threatening to rebel. Remembering all the Carter talk about the need for change, considering the proposals made and actions taken for organizational change and even for some social change, and especially considering the hundreds of Carterites talking about change and hoping for it who came to the White House and elsewhere in government with their Jimmy, his White House turns out to be a remarkably placid and passive place. Maybe that's why it seems to this observer after 10 months on the fringes of it to be a strangely *dull* place.

Even so, and there really is no contradiction here, it is a busy place. Things happen. Carter announced at the start of the weekly Cabinet meeting on October 17 that he wanted all but three of the 14 or so staff assistants who usually attend to leave him alone for a concluding half hour with the Cabinet members. The three assistants allowed to remain were Stuart Eizenstat, Frank Moore and Cabinet Secretary Jack Watson. Press Secretary Jody Powell looked in briefly, then left. Hamilton Jordan, who loathes Cabinet meetings and attends only when he is ordered to, appeared for this half hour. He was there for a reason. A few days previously Secretary of Energy James Schlesinger and Eizenstat had addressed a confidential memo to the President, reminding him that four Senate bills incorporating mangled remnants of his energy program were about to go into House-Senate conference and that this would be the last chance to get an acceptable measure out of Congress. Therefore, they said, the administration's energies and talents should be mobilized to the fullest extent in a carefully preplanned effort to get the best possible bill. Carter assigned Jordan to draft a plan. He did and he and Carter presented it to the Cabinet. In precisely defined stages, it covered everything from Cabinet speeches to individual lobbying of Senators and Representatives to TV talk show appearances. Vice President Mondale, already active, was assigned a major lobbying and TV role. Carter, also following the plan, scheduled conferences with key senators and representatives and instructed his speech writers to emphasize the energy theme during his trip October 21-22 to Michigan, Iowa and California. Trade Representative Robert Strauss was assigned to oversee the support operation and Cabinet members were ordered to report to him daily on what they had done and proposed to do for the energy program. James Fallows and his staff of presidential writers prepared speech packets for the Cabinet members, simplifying the complex issues as much as possible and avoiding such tiresome and difficult questions as just how the Carter proposal to raise gasoline prices by raising taxes and costs would lower gasoline consumption.

Fallows and his five writers also were busy with early drafts of speeches to be delivered (or discarded) by Carter during his projected trip to nine countries (Saudi Arabia had just been added) on four continents in eleven days beginning November 22. A minor historic first was involved. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the President's assistant for national security affairs and NSC director, for the first time permitted members of the NSC staff to collaborate with Fallows' writers on the early drafts instead of preparing separate drafts. Brzezinski's private view had been and still was that he and his people were capable of writing the President's foreign policy speeches without assistance. Collaboration in any degree between Brzezinski and Fallows had developed slowly and the relationship was still far from warm. The process was not aided when one of the Fallows writers, Jerry Doolittle, told Eleanor Randolph of the *Chicago Tribune* that one of his more painful tasks was to translate NSC drafts into understandable English. Brzezinski was not amused.

John Osborne

Anatomy of Health Care Costs, VI

AMA vs. HMOs

Last summer the American Medical Association leveled its guns on a speck in the distance called the HMO. HMO stands for Health Maintenance Organization, a phrase that refers to any clinic that sells its medical

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services for a price fixed in advance. It sells a promise to treat your ailments, provided you use its medical staff. An insurance company, by contrast, sells a promise to pay a specified quantity of doctors' bills with few restrictions on the doctors you may see. The AMA is scornful of HMOs, or "group health," and stolid in its support of the fee-payment system. The blast fired last summer came from Peter Van Note, an AMA staffer. He published a report in June charging that HMOs have been unsuccessful in the US, and that the small successes they have had come from "skimming" off the healthiest people for patients, "skimping" on services and drawing sustenance from the federal teat.

The AMA's opposition to group health derives, it claims, from a desire to keep the profession pure. Only a fool would volunteer to become a staff doctor; only a quack would accept a meager salary from a group health plan. The true professional who lives by the letter of the AMA's code does not advertise, does not join partnerships with non-doctors, does not underbid his peers to get business, refuses to accept a salary unless it is equal to or higher than what fee-collecting doctors make and never, *never* permits someone else to collect a fee for a service that he himself has provided. That is the golden rule of the AMA ethics code: outsiders must not be allowed in the fee-collection department, unless they are employed by the doctor himself. This is why Blue Shield, the insurance company that pays doctors' bills, is nearly always kept separate from Blue Cross, the company that pays hospital bills. Most Blue Shield plans are controlled by doctors, and they don't like to have hospitals looking over their business. The AMA's phrase for the bogey it hopes to exorcise with these rules is "the corporate practice of medicine."

To the AMA, the words conjure up a vision of a system that's efficient but uncaring, obsessed with its own welfare and not the patient's, a chilling nightmare of modernity. The AMA fears that if a non-doctor sits in control of the funds, he will shift the clinic's focus away from medicine toward efficiency and profits. That fear explains why the AMA's recent report characterizes the doctors who work for HMOs as drones and bureaucrats.

Despite the AMA's efforts to maintain tradition, the system just doesn't work according to the AMA's ideal. HMOs can't be blamed for the change. They are insignificant. For many people, the medical establishment itself fits the description of the AMA's corporate bogey: cold, confusing and unresponsive. It is very difficult to learn about a new doctor if you have just moved into town. You can visit him in his office, for a fee, of course. But it's impossible to do any comparative shopping. The hub of the modern health care system is an enormous corporation called the hospital. No one should enter it alone, for the individual hasn't a chance if he falls into its clutches.

If the AMA's resistance to group health hasn't made the system humane, it certainly has succeeded in doing something else. It has choked off competitive forms of health care and channeled most private health funds into the sluices of the fee-for-service system. The AMA's battle to suppress group health has been long and tedious. It was only in the last few years that the AMA began to lose the struggle in court and prudently adopted less abrasive tactics. According to an antitrust brief filed against the AMA by the Federal Trade Commission this spring, the AMA spends "at least $1 million per year directly on legislative and lobbying activities, and has admitted that there are only approximately a dozen organizations in the country that spend more money on lobbying. . . . In 1974 the AMPAC [the AMA's political arm] and the state PACs were the largest contributors in the nation to congressional campaigns, giving a total of almost $1.5 million (AMPAC itself distributed over $830,000 to 280 candidates.)" The antitrust brief reported that the AMA budget in 1976 allowed $4.3 million for "representing the profession" and $5.9 million for "strengthening organized medicine," funds that presumably paid for diverse PR projects like Peter Van Note's report on HMOs.

When you put aside the principled reasons for the AMA's opposition to group health, some strong self-interested reasons rise to the surface. The central one is this: group health shifts the burden of business risk from the insurance company to the doctor and makes it more difficult for him to get rich. Under the insurance payment system that dominates the market now, the doctor suffers no penalty if he raises his fees by inflationary amounts or sends people to the hospital unnecessarily. The insurance company pays. It bears the risk, and the patient almost never challenges the doctor's charges as long as they are paid. When costs increase rapidly, the insurance companies raise their rates. Because most people with insurance do not have to pay these rates themselves, and because companies get a tax break for buying insurance for their employees, the resistance to rate increases is small. That is part of the reason why the cost of that health care increases faster than any other sector of the economy.

In the HMO system, it's not necessary to have an insurance company serve as a middleman. The customer signs a contract directly with the doctor. Inflationary fees are more directly traceable to the doctors who charge them. It is fair to hold doctors responsible not just for fee increases, but also for the cost of prescriptions and tests and trips to the hospital. If an HMO raises its fees too rapidly, overprescribes or sends people to the hospital unnecessarily, its costs will rise more rapidly. If they are excessive, the customers will look elsewhere for a better price. In order to survive, the HMO may occasionally trim its budget, even freeze salaries in a bad year. An HMO is less likely than

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insurance-financed clinics to buy elaborate machinery or invest in new construction. It risks money on new services only if its members are reasonably certain that the patients will be willing to pay for them. The HMO is competitive.

Given the AMA's success in stopping group health projects, the government's decision to intervene in the fight does not seem to have been a rash one. Federal legal support for group health was intermittent and less than enthusiastic for 50 years. Financial help didn't arrive until 1973, and then it came in the form of "demonstration grants" to test whether or not the crazy West Coast notion of prepaid health care could succeed in other parts of the country. Then, as now, the Kaiser plan of California was the model HMO. The funding program was introduced by Nixon and therefore got only lukewarm support from liberal Democrats who controlled the health committees in Congress and were more interested in pushing for complete nationalization of the health insurance system in its current form. In 1976 President Ford signed a bill amending the HMO law, liberalizing the standards an HMO must meet to be "federally qualified." About $80 million has been spent in grants and loans. The 1976 liberalization, which passed Congress despite the AMA's opposition, gave rise to the charges published in Van Note's paper that HMOs are allowed to "skim" and "skimp." It's true that under the amended law, HMOs are allowed to be somewhat selective about whom they enroll in the first five years and, after that, whenever they are in deficit. It's true as well that they are not required to offer as many "basic services," such as dental care and addict rehabilitation, as originally planned in the 1973 law. But then private insurance companies are not required to meet *any* federal standard. The Public Health Service Advisor on HMOs, Peter Kirsch, said last week that the AMA has not produced any solid evidence that HMOs skimp on care or skim the market for health patients.

The HMO lobby in Washington, DC, Group Health Association of America, cites volumes of studies showing that HMOs consistently send people to the hospital less frequently than other programs (400 to 500 patient days each year per 1000 subscribers, versus 800 to 1100 for regular insurance), cost 25 to 30 percent less and enroll more minority types than do other plans. But statistics aren't persuasive in the marketplace. The real test is the number of sales. Here the HMOs are in trouble. Size is a tremendous advantage in the insurance business. It makes possible great economies of scale. Risk is reduced. Large companies with respected names attract "normal" subscribers who have no special need for health care. Today HMOs control only about four percent of the business; their financial flexibility is correspondingly small. They have no national network to permit the transfer of benefits from one city to another, but they are trying to create one. Their rates usually are at least as high as those of Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

Despite these problems, HMOs seem to do well when matched against other plans in a controlled environment. There is perhaps no more competitive market for health insurance than the federal government. Civil servants may choose from a list of more than 60 plans, each of which meets Civil Service standards and publishes rates and benefits in a standard format that makes shopping easy. Last year the government contributed about $53 a month towards the purchase of any "family plan" a civil servant wanted to buy. The rest was paid by the subscriber. During the fall open season in 1976 when employees were allowed to shop around and shift plans, the exodus from Blue Cross-Blue Shield was striking. Presumably people were reacting to the large increase in rates. More than 70,000 left. The plans that gained subscribers were union or employee-organization plans (up 12.5 percent), HMOs (up 6.9 percent), physician-run individual practice plans (up 4.9 percent) and commercial insurance (up 2.5 percent). The Blue Cross-Blue Shield rate increase will be larger this year since inflation in the Blues has continued as always, and the Blues may well lose some more subscribers. The HMO advocates predict that the situation for the Blues can only worsen, while HMOs, which at least have an incentive to control costs, will get stronger.

Jimmy Carter, HEW Secretary Joe Califano, his undersecretary Hale Champion and presidential adviser Peter Bourne all speak enthusiastically of HMOs. They intend to generate dozens of new ones as part of the administration's program to stop inflation in the cost of health care. This is encouraging. If the object is to cut costs—and that is Carter's object—using HMOs is the most intelligent way of doing the job. Unlike the other cost-cutting gimmicks, the HMO actually rewards efficiency.

Eliot Marshall

Unskilled economists, unskilled workers.

Stagflation

A tide of stagflation—unemployment and inflation at the same time—has engulfed the industrial nations of the world. To live with it is obviously wasteful, possibly immoral. It is also politically embarrassing. The solid middle class suffers most from inflation. Family security, built through industry and thrift is eroded by a rising price level. Sluggish production weighs most heavily on the most defenseless, like blacks in the

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United States. During the past 23 years black unemployment has averaged just under 10 percent. It rose to 13 percent in the last three years and is edging upward. For whites the average unemployment rate in the past 23 years was 4.7 percent and is about one-and-a-half percent above that now. In Europe, that level of white employment would be considered a disaster. But then how should we characterize the record for blacks. Catastrophe? Economic holocaust? Meanwhile, within the last decade alone, prices have doubled, cutting the purchasing power of pensions and other fixed incomes in half. For the middle class with much of its savings in low-interest bank accounts, this has brought disaster of a very different kind.

One reaction, highly commended by the facts, must be that the economic nostrums of the past have failed. That conclusion *must* follow, as we say—but only from logic. Politics and economic rituals are another matter. The easy, time-honored fiscal and monetary policies retain their sway in Washington. Economic reputations rest upon these flowers of Keynes, with roots in the 1930s and glamorous blossoms in the Kennedy days of the early 1960s. Walter Heller, veteran official or unofficial Democratic adviser since the Kennedy administration, urged a $15 billion tax cut in recent testimony before the Joint Economic Committee of Congress. Among liberal stalwarts on Capitol Hill, and within the Carter administration as well, there is a potent impulse to follow his lead. This tax cut would be in addition to a reduction already included in Carter's new tax reform bill.

But the record shows unmistakably that these efforts are self-defeating. Pumping up the economy in the 1960s helped both whites and blacks. But even in the best years, it left the black unemployment rate hovering between six and seven percent. Fiscal pep pills for business activity after the 1971 recession also helped some, but barely pushed the black unemployment rate below nine percent. In both instances the moves generated severe inflation, duly followed by the usual "corrective" recessions. When will the economists, or our politicians, ever learn?

Special concern about black unemployment is justified by more than compassion. True, blacks suffer the most and their economic plight is one of the stigmata of past discrimination. But abnormally high black unemployment rates reflect a fact of more significance. Teenagers and females—black and white—also experience abnormally severe unemployment. These groups—blacks, teenagers, and females—share an economically fatal characteristic: a disproportionately large number of unskilled workers. After all, in August of this year almost 80 percent of the jobless were white, more than three-fourths were out of their teens, and despite the great and sudden flow of women to the labor force, more than half the jobless were male. For the entire population, as well as each of its parts, the most significant cause of joblessness is lack of the skills that American industry increasingly demands.

The evidence is too striking to be missed. This fall business firms are "almost desperate" in their search for "skilled machinists, tool-and-die makers, accountants, engineers, scientists, computer programmers, experienced miners and a host of other occupations requiring technical backgrounds," according to *Business Week* of October 10. Automotive centers like Detroit are suffering "almost chronic" shortages of diesel mechanics, machine repairers, turret lathe operators and the like. These shortages of skilled workers lead to inflation, and that in turn is a situation that typically induces a "corrective" recession.

Standard fiscal and monetary policies, by themselves, cannot possibly yield full employment without inflation or anything even close to this ideal situation. What these policies have provided is an escalating price level, spreading joblessness and six recessions in the last 30 years. More direct approaches and a bolder use of state power are needed.

Poor blacks are a useful focal point for analysis. They crowd the welfare rolls of the nation's largest cities. A relatively few of them also account for much of city crime. All the idle among them live at public expense, directly or indirectly, properly or improperly. Practically all the unskilled blacks now idle want to work. This is evident in the avalanche of applications that greets each job opening for which they might be eligible in cities like New York and Washington. It is evident also in surveys and polls, including those taken of welfare mothers. Poor blacks are crowded together in ghettos and therefore are more visible. But the same analysis also applies to poor whites. Apparently three or four million out of the nation's seven million unemployed—black and white—are more or less chronically idle. Many work for short periods but never enjoy a steady—much less a permanent—job.

They represent a valuable but wasted national resource, demoralized, a burden to themselves and society. There appears to be nearly universal agreement on the wisdom of putting them to work. Presidents say it. Congressional committees proclaim it. Citizens affirm it overwhelmingly in opinion polls.

What's restraining us? Timidity. Putting people to work—up to the point of full employment and without inflation—requires national planning and coordination of all the powers and policies at a democratic government's command. It requires extraordinary fortitude and responsibility in Washington. None of this is in the modern American tradition. Much more customary and politically acceptable are makeshift, patchwork gimmicks, each just large enough to lower the decibel level of some particularly noisy interest group. Farmers get higher support prices. Manufacturers get tariffs and import quotas. Now poor blacks get their turn. They are being offered an expansion of benefits under the immodestly named Comprehensive

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Employment and Training Act.

The CETA gives money from the US Treasury to state, city, and county governments in the hope that they will create jobs for the idle. The disadvantaged, those on welfare and veterans get preference. The federal government admits that the impact of its funds has been "blunted to a larger or smaller degree by reduced state and local payrolls." One independent authority, Robert I. Lerman, estimates that only 50 cents out of each federal dollar thus spent has created new jobs. Local governments (with rare exceptions like Mayor White's Boston) lack either the will or the ability to organize work projects that fulfill real public needs. Last month the Department of Labor accused Chicago, New York, Atlanta and Gary, Indiana of misusing funds, and the Labor Department probably would concede that its surveillance has not been exhaustive. Washington, DC's mayor recently announced a one-year federally funded training program to prepare men and women for occupations such as reading meters and guarding buildings. The cost of a year's training was estimated to be $9000 per person, approximately double the annual tuition at Harvard College. The program's sponsors were unable to assure *The Washington Post* that jobs would be available at the end of the year.

Only the federal government is capable of (1) organizing a national program to put the idle in useful jobs, (2) directing their efforts toward the most important public needs, and (3) adjusting productive techniques to suit the generally modest potential of the workers available. CETA at its peak next year is expected to employ 700,000 people. At least three million public jobs are needed, more or less permanently, to take up the slack in the US economy. To run so vast a program without disrupting the private sector would require the bold federal planning and political courage mentioned earlier. Wages on public projects would have to be kept relatively modest despite labor union pressure. Otherwise eligible workers never would leave public projects for private industry no matter how much the latter was booming. To avoid inflation the cost of the program would have to be met by taxes. (Of course there will be offsetting savings in welfare and the like.) In effect, taxpayers would transfer part of their purchasing power to the formerly idle. In return they would have a right to expect businesslike management and a flow of new visible, useful services. Otherwise the program would never survive the next election.

What this amounts to is a coordinated government response to the fundamental problem of economic instability. It entails surmounting obstacles that are imbedded in our politics. Is the federal government capable of rising to these challenges? If not, look for continued unemployment ahead, black and white, plus inflation.

Melville J. Ulmer

Getting tough with the Soviets is bad for human rights in Russia, and here too.

Pitfalls of Morality

Their elegantly furious manifestos no longer fill our journals of opinion and their eyes sunk in billiard-ball heads no longer stare balefully at us from grainy photos on our front pages and network news shows. In fact, as the European security conference to review the 1975 Helsinki accords got efficiently underway October 4 in Belgrade, the days when the plight of the Soviet dissidents captured the American fancy and sunk detente lower than Bert Lance's credit rating were being viewed as just another bad Cold War memory.

As recently as early summer the Helsinki pact's human rights "basket" threatened to produce a major US-Soviet showdown at the Belgrade review session. But the meeting clearly has come at the worst possible time for the Carter administration. With SALT and even the Mideast peace process apparently inching forward after months of deadlock, US officials are bending over backwards to make sure the proceedings are as bland and "businesslike" as possible. It's hard to tell whether Washington or Moscow is more jittery about someone bringing up human rights. The change in Carter's own sentiments has been embarrassingly complete. Having told the UN in March that "no member can avoid its responsibilities to review and to speak when torture or unwarranted deprivation of freedom occurs in any part of the world," he returned to the General Assembly the day the review session opened and totally ignored the subject. The explanation he offered in his *Baltimore Sun* essay in mid-September—"human rights cannot be the only goal of our foreign policy"—can only charitably be described as matter-of-fact.

Many of his more outspoken aides have turned even trickier backflips. Only last spring Patricia M. Derian, the State Department's human rights coordinator, and Allard K. Lowenstein of the UN Mission were openly suggesting that if the Soviets didn't take Helsinki's human rights provisions seriously, the Kremlin couldn't be trusted on arms control. Both seem to have been rewarded with lighter workloads. Now, the word from such an exemplar of diplomatic discretion as Andrew Young is, "Once you make your point, you give people time to respond. I think the Soviets get our point." Young said recently, "I don't know if we advance the cause of human rights by continuing to cite specific violations."

Having just completed that cumbersome, tortured process of semantic squirming, selective amnesia and outright rationalization by which bureaucracies officially change their minds, the administration understandably believes that it has shunted human rights safely to the side for the time being. But the

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characteristic American belief that the fate of people and nations abroad hinges more on American will and actions than their own is at work here, too. The Soviet dissidents have played a critical part in shaping American attitudes towards detente. If the administration has finally come to see the pitfalls of morality in foreign policy, the dissidents have not. Their demanding, fiercely principled arguments are likely to be pricking the American public conscience and therefore influencing policy for years to come.

The most prominent dissidents have skillfully manipulated the politics of shame and guilt. Their suffering and courage tax our imaginations, and it's no slight to the Bukovskys and the Slozhenitsyns to observe that they're very aware of this. Addressing American audiences from perches conspicuously high up in the moral stratosphere, their passionate denunciation of detente as a hideously immoral policy which sacrifices the Soviet people's struggle for freedom on the altar of a dubious peace with their ruthless masters is tailor-made for a country longing to return to a pre-Vietnam, pre-CIA, pre-Watergate state of grace.

The dissidents have helped immeasurably those in the US who oppose any form of accommodation with the USSR. They have provided the Jacksons, the Moynihans, the Reagans, the Meanys, the Podhoretzes, the Zumwalts and the Nitzes with a degree of moral credibility that their panicky flag waving and dreary breast beating never could accumulate on its own. But the most lasting contribution of the dissidents to the debate on human rights and detente may be to clarify the premises most anti-detente rhetoric has come to rest on. One especially vulnerable premise stands out: the notion that ending detente, "getting tough" and returning to a state of belligerent, Cold War-style confrontation, will somehow help the Soviet dissidents in particular and the cause of human rights in general.

This idea flies in the face of history and common sense. But like most absurdities in politics, it is surrounded by a patina of reason. The zenith of detente in 1972 did coincide with a Soviet crackdown on dissent, and in a sense the one triggered the other. Having launched a new foreign policy by softening its longstanding hostility to all things Western, which required some ideological relaxation, the Kremlin sought to limit the inevitable internal damage by curbing the noisiest, most potentially dangerous troublemakers. Yet to recommend junking detente as a possible remedy is simpleminded. If low tensions increase repression, the assumption seems to be, high tensions will reduce it. In fact, repression in the Soviet Union peaked under Stalin, far and away the most xenophobic, rampantly paranoid Soviet ruler. And with the admittedly enormous exceptions of the collectivization drive and the political purges of the 1930s, his rule was harshest during the iciest days of the Cold War.

Despite the current crackdown on major dissidents, it is widely acknowledged that for the average Soviet citizen life is freer of repression than at any time since the early 1960s. The most convincing proof of this happens to be the unprecedented visibility of the dissidents themselves. The liberalization that has occurred recently reflects the degree to which Soviet leaders perceive their international adversaries as rational, reasonable and eager to reach useful agreements in certain areas. The Soviet system remains harshly repressive. But how much tighter would its grip be if the Kremlin saw itself surrounded by an actively dangerous and hostile world?

The "get tough" policy has serious domestic consequences as well. Hardliners have dwelled on the relationship between detente and the state of human rights in the Soviet Union, but they have neglected detente's impact on human rights in the US. The international climate affects the health of freedom here, too. Freedom deteriorates visibly during prolonged periods of sharp superpower tension. A sudden downturn in relations with the Soviet Union by adopting the hardliners' truculent policies could easily usher in another era when our freedoms are too readily subordinated to dubious considerations of "national security."

There is a basic incompatibility between practicing democracy and preaching a devil theory of international affairs. The dissidents are convinced that they have cornered the market on virtue—an understandable and justifiable belief for those battling totalitarianism from the inside. But in a democratic environment, the spread of this attitude tends to encourage gagging of dissenting voices of dismissing the possibility of legitimate differences of opinion. The range of permissible views is steadily narrowed, certain outlooks are ostracized, others enshrined, disputes become tests of loyalty, the ideals of pluralism and tolerance fade into the background or are angrily trampled in the stampede toward conformity. We begin to mirror those we most despise.

To challenge the obstructionists and the hardliners here and in the Soviet Union is not to say that all human rights advocates can do is—in George Meany's words—"be nice to the Soviet Union" and naively hope they will change their ways out of the goodness of their hearts. Nor is it to accept the crackpot realism of the Kissinger era, when the mere mention of morality and human rights was seen as a threat to the pursuit of detente. Rather, it is a matter of driving home the point that peace and freedom are linked in a more complex way than our loudest rhetoric credits. In recent years, we've heard a great deal about the impossibility of achieving lasting peace with a totalitarian empire whose values we abhor. But human rights cannot flourish here or in the USSR in an international climate of tension, suspicion, chauvinism, stridence and truculence. We must begrudge the Soviet dissidents their views. Far from being immoral, detente can help to achieve the

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morally desirable goal of liberalizing Soviet society. Fortunately, this point of view seems to be catching on in official Washington. It could go a long way towards dissipating the fog of bluster and easy moralizing that enveloped us just a short while ago, and which is never likely to drift too far from our thoughts.

Alan Tonelson

Alan Tonelson is a New York writer specializing in international affairs.

Squeezing out
domestic agriculture workers.

Apple Picker Blues

Every fall in apple country the Winesaps deepen to a ruddy hue and the Delicious grow plump with sweet, heavy juice and the growers have their annual showdown with the Department of Labor. The confrontation ritual—negotiations, suits, court orders and appeals—concerns how many foreign applepickers the growers will be allowed to bring into the country to harvest domestic crops. The issue in states like Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont and Maine, is whether apple growers are refusing to hire US workers out of preference for submissive, hard working Jamaicans.

The growers claim that there are simply not enough domestic applepickers available to get their produce harvested. But the Labor Department must certify that there is a genuine need for alien workers before the Immigration Department will issue visas permitting foreign workers to enter the country. And the Labor Department contends that there are more than 100,000 unemployed domestic agricultural workers who could do the harvesting instead.

Officials of the Labor Department maintain that US growers have gone to great lengths to avoid employing domestic workers out of preference for Jamaicans. The money the Jamaicans earn at rates up to $50 a day during the seven to eight-week apple harvest is more than they could make in a full year of work back home. The growers prefer the Jamaicans because they are a captive labor force. They come into the country on a contract with an individual grower. If one is fired or quits, or if he gets into trouble, he faces immediate deportation. Such conditions make it virtually impossible for the Jamaicans to protest any wage or working condition, or to shop around for the best paying work once they are in the country. With a 33 percent unemployment rate and an average per capita income of $1000 in Jamaica, it is clear why Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall has described this imported workforce as "scared and hungry."

Federal law stipulates that before aliens can be hired, the jobs must first be offered to US citizens. And it is the Labor Department's job to see that the growers make reasonable efforts to procure US applepickers before they get permission to import Jamaicans.

Growers get some US pickers from crew leaders who, year after year, trek up the East coast with southern agricultural workers. But when a grower's crew leader fails to bring enough workers with him, the grower must look elsewhere for additional pickers. The Labor Department maintains an Interstate Recruitment System which takes orders for workers from apple growers, then attempts through a network of state offices to match those orders with agricultural workers needing jobs. The growers would prefer to import the highly pliable Jamaicans. So year after year they try to disrupt the Labor Department's recruitment system. This year they thwarted the system with particular success.

To begin with, the growers refused to respond to the Labor Department's repeated request that they submit their orders for the number of pickers they would need during harvest time. While they were stalling the Labor Department, the growers negotiated a contract with the Jamaican government which relieved them of the expense of paying for the alien pickers' transportation to the orchards. After persuading Jamaican contracting agents to bear the cost of their workers' transportation, the growers began submitting their orders to the Labor Department. But for the first time, their orders for domestic workers did not include the traditional offer to pay the cost of transportation to their orchards.

The Labor Department refused to accept the growers' orders under those conditions. They said that it was unreasonable to expect poverty-ridden migrants to be able to pay their own transportation. The growers, however, were obdurate. Their tactic was to prove that domestic labor was unavailable, and they wanted to guarantee it by refusing to pay for their transportation to the orchards.

At the end of April, Labor Department officials reported having found more than 2500 agricultural workers in Florida who were willing and able to come north to harvest apples in the late summer. But because the growers were still refusing to pay for their transportation, the workers could not be signed on.

By the end of June, the growers in state after state began to sue the Labor Department for its refusal to accept orders that did not include advance payment of transportation. And state by state, the Labor Department was overruled by local courts.

By the beginning of August, the Labor Department was under court order in New Hampshire, Vermont, Virginia, and Pennsylvania to accept the growers'

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orders for workers without the traditional advance payment for transportation. But by this time, it was already too late to recruit the Florida workers previously contracted, because they already had started their migration up the East coast, picking peaches and apples in South Carolina, sweet potatoes and tobacco in North Carolina. In mid-August, Labor Department officials reported that an additional 600 agricultural workers were available in North Carolina. But because the long-delayed orders had not yet been processed in Washington, the workers could not be signed on.

At the end of August, the Labor Department found 3000 experienced workers in Puerto Rico, where unemployment is running 20 percent and the annual per-capita income is about $2300.

The apple growers, however, like Puerto Rican workers even less than those of the mainland. Puerto Rican workers are protected by an extremely strict law defining the conditions under which they can work. It also gives them the right to file complaints once they are back on the island against the mainland growers, who must then appear in Puerto Rican courts. The growers balked at hiring Puerto Ricans. The Puerto Rican Minister of Labor finally offered to suspend enforcement of the much hated Public Law 87, since new regulations promulgated by the Labor Department last January offered many of the same protections. The growers' attorneys, nevertheless, continued to hem and haw, worrying that the Puerto Rican Minister of Labor did not have the authority to suspend enforcement of a public law. Finally, the growers offered to interview Puerto Rican workers for harvest work, if the Labor Department paid their way to the orchards where they could first be looked over. But the growers would make no guarantees about actually hiring any of them.

The Labor Department refused to pick up the transportation tab for the Puerto Ricans. Labor has no funds authorized to pay for this transportation, and claimed that transportation costs are properly the burden of the growers themselves. As harvest time was approaching in mid-August, the Labor Department continued to withhold from the growers their much coveted certification to import Jamaican workers.

Finally, on August 29, Labor Department lawyers were given ten hours' notice to appear in federal court in Roanoke, Virginia. After a two-hour hearing, a Republican judge signed, virtually without change, a consent decree prepared by attorneys representing the growers which ordered the Labor Department to certify the growers for however many Jamaican workers they felt they needed. Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall called the decision an "alarming precedent," which reversed a five-year decline in the importing of alien workers.

The growers got certification to import more than 5000 Jamaican apple pickers. By the end of September, with the harvest just beginning, the growers had imported 75 percent more alien workers than during the entire 1976 picking season. Meanwhile, thousands of unemployed US agricultural workers in Puerto Rico, North and South Carolina, Florida and other states remained out of work. And they will likely be out of work during the apple season next year too unless the Labor Department can overturn the Roanoke decision on appeal this winter.

Dorothy McGhee

Dorothy McGhee is a Washington writer.

The civil service system rewards merit. But what does it do for government?

Seats At the Banquet

by Nicholas Lemann

The federal civil service is the king of meritocracies in America: bigger, older and more elaborately constructed than any other. Of the nearly three million civilian jobs in the federal government, 60 percent are administered directly by the Civil Service Commission. The commission says that almost all of the rest are regulated according to merit mechanisms. As befits a meritocracy, all those employees represent only a tiny fraction of those wishing for federal employment, and all of them had to fulfill a series of objective,

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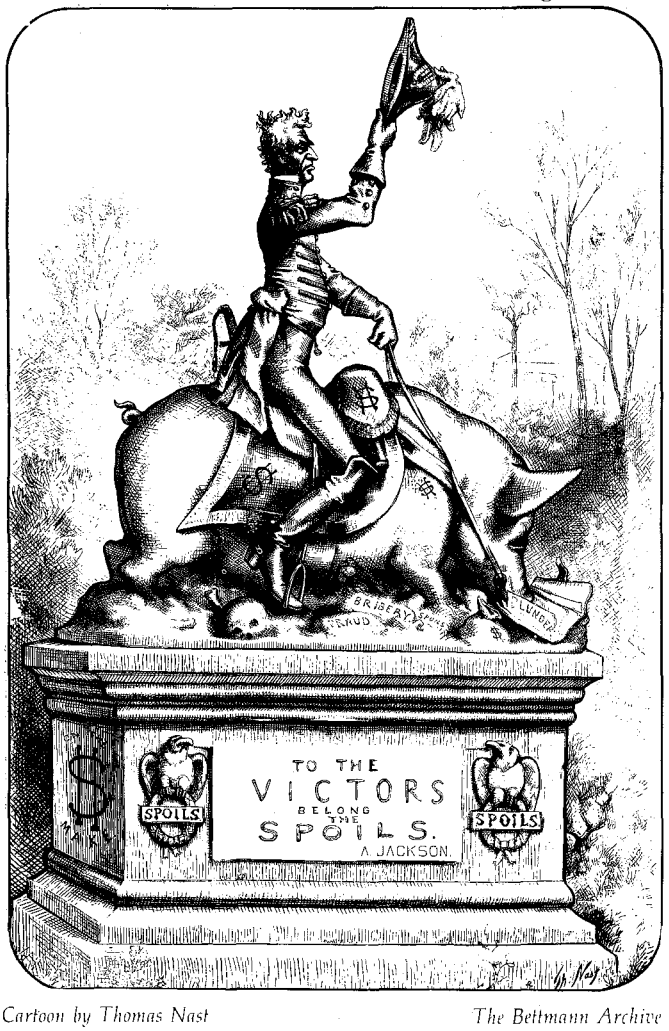
quantifiable criteria before being hired.

The civil service's stated devotion to merit as its single guiding principle is total. The heraldic crest of the Civil Service Commission consists of a gold star,



Cartoon by Thomas Nast *The Bettmann Archive*

symbolizing guidance to man, superimposed on a wreath, symbolizing merit. In the commission's lexicon, the word "merit" is appended to every aspect of the employment process. Hiring is called "merit hiring," promotions are called "merit promotions," pay raises are called "merit raises." All those procedures are carried out according to an immensely complicated set of rules, painstakingly designed to ensure fairness. The civil service system has had 150 years to refine itself as a mechanism for selecting and rewarding people of talent and drive, so as to produce the most honest and efficient government possible. Whatever meritocracy is, the civil service epitomizes it.

The history of the civil service can be seen as a struggle toward three shining goals. First, to weed out any factor in federal hiring considered unrelated to merit, such as political affiliation. Second, to systematize the process of finding the meritorious. And third, to increase the rewards, in money and security, of federal employment. This last is known in civil service circles as "strengthening the merit system through the personnel system."

From the beginning of American politics, the handing out of government jobs has been a major concern of elected officials; and from the beginning there has been some controversy over using political considerations as a factor in hiring. George Washington was known to look for honest, efficient government employees. But he also required that people he hired be supporters of the American Revolution, and Federalists. As the two-party system came into its own, what we now call merit became progressively less important than loyalty to the President's party and his policies. By the time Andrew Jackson came into office the infamous spoils system was in full swing.

The evils of the spoils system, having been taught to every American by merit-system grammar school teachers, need no great elaboration. The spoils system made continuity and expertise in the federal service almost impossible; it was widely corrupt (the Washington papers carried ads offering $5000 cash for a $1500-a-year government job); and it plagued every high official with a constant press of tobacco-chewing job-seekers camped outside his office (scenes immortalized in dozens of Thomas Nast cartoons). But the spoils system never was as extensive as the attacks on it have made it sound. Abraham Lincoln, for instance, made more than twice as many patronage appointments as any of his predecessors, and this amounted to only 1400 jobs—almost a thousand fewer than President Carter is allowed to fill by patronage. Of course, in Lincoln's time all the job applicants were free to sit in the corridors of the White House, while now we have tighter security and more subtle job-seeking techniques.

After the Civil War civil service reform became one of the great political causes. For 15 years there were hesitant steps toward the establishment of a merit system. The decisive boost for the reformers came on July 2, 1881, when President Garfield was shot on a railroad platform by Charles Guiteau, a man who lives in American history as a "disappointed office-seeker." Guiteau had worked in the Garfield campaign. After the assassination it came out that in one of his myriad letters to the new President asking for a consulship in Paris, he had written, "the men that did the business last fall are the ones to be remembered." The Civil Service Commission's official history comments, "No more revealing description of the spoils system has ever been penned." (This official history also blames the

The Meritocratic Moment

The process of divining and rewarding merit is one of the principal themes of American social life. With the current controversy over "reverse discrimination," it has also become one of the obsessions of the American political debate. This is the second in a series of articles examining the meritocratic machinery at work in real life.

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spoils system for the death of one other President, William Henry Harrison, and for lengthening the Civil War)

The Pendleton Act of 1883 set up the Civil Service Commission, with the power to fill 13,900 lowly career clerkships. Its mandate was to consider only qualifications, and not politics. Although it treated the input to government—that is, hiring—it's safe to say that the primary purpose of the act creating the civil service system was to affect government's output: its honesty and efficiency and expertise. The concerns of the 14,000 clerks themselves were not terribly important.

As time passed the civil service grew both in number and proportion. By 1901 the Civil Service Commission had jurisdiction over 106,000 jobs representing 41.5 percent of the federal work force. Theodore Roosevelt, who started out in politics as a civil service commissioner in New York, increased it to 235,000 jobs, more than half the federal payroll. By the end of World War II, the government meritocracy had grown to full adulthood: in fact, it was then a little larger than it is now. As it grew, the purpose of the civil service system changed somewhat. Refinements in the method of input had less apparent connection with improving the government's output. Reforms such as pay raises, improved working conditions and insurance protection didn't directly make the government more honest or efficient, but they did make working for it more rewarding. Even more merit-oriented reforms such as antidiscrimination rules and scientific selection processes were seen more in terms of fairness to applicants than as ways of improving the quality of government. Whatever their purpose, these reforms made government service so appealing that the civil service system became not only the largest meritocracy in the country, but also the most selective.

Nowadays people who want government jobs don't camp out in the White House hallways. They stand in very long and orderly lines at 105 Federal Job Information Centers around the country. The Federal Pay Comparability Act of 1970 decreed that government wages should be equivalent to those in the private sector. (In fact, they are occasionally higher, and the recession shortly after the Comparability Act, which didn't affect the government, made job prospects elsewhere considerably dimmer.) As a result, last fiscal year more than 250,000 people applied for entry-level white-collar jobs in the civil service (many more inquired about them), and only 9034 were hired. That's 3.7 percent, an index of exclusivity that would put most medical schools to shame. It's twice as hard to get a federal job today as it was ten years ago.

Coming:
Michael Walzer
on War Crimes

Everything about the way the civil service hires and promotes people is extremely complicated in order to assure the utmost in fairness. But, boiled down, it works like this:

All civil service jobs are ranked according to a "General Schedule" or "GS" rating system. People with college degrees but no job experience are eligible for jobs rated GS-5 or GS-7 (starting salary: $9959 to $12,336). Applicants take a standardized, multiple-choice test devised by the Civil Service Commission, called the Professional Administrative Career Examination. It resembles a College Board or IQ exam. The PACE test is scored on a 100-point scale. If a junior-level applicant is what the Civil Service Commission calls an "Outstanding Scholar," having graduated in the top tenth of a college class or with a grade-point average of 3.5 or above, the PACE exam score is automatically raised halfway to 100 points. Seventy is passing, but an applicant needs to be in the high nineties these days to have even a prayer of being hired. When a bureaucrat wants to hire someone new at GS-5 or GS-7, he writes out a description of the job and sends it over to the Commission, which runs the description through its computers and sends back a list of suitable applicants, ranked according to PACE scores and any special skills they might have. Here, as in other new hires in the government, the all-important Rule of Three comes into play: a manager must hire one of the top three people on the list the Commission sends him, or give the Commission a very good reason why not. Since the Commission has selected its list according to the manager's own description of the job, few reasons are good enough. The manager usually interviews the three (this being the first personal contact the applicant has had with anyone in a position to offer a job) and chooses the best one—on merit grounds, of course.

At every GS level, the operating assumption of the Civil Service Commission is that merit can be quantified. So at the middle- and senior-level jobs (which start at GS-9, and $15,090 a year), where experience is required but an exam isn't, the application consists of objective questions about grades in school, previous jobs held, and special skills. If I were to apply for a mid-level civil service job as a writer, I wouldn't have to submit any samples of my work. My merit quotient would be determined solely on the basis of my resume. The procedure for actual hiring remains the same as for entry-level jobs: the commission sends whoever is hiring a list of qualified applicants, and the Rule of Three is enforced. At the pinnacle of the civil service, the executive level (GS-16, -17, and -18; salaries from $42,423 to $47,500) the hiring process is looser, similar to a corporate search. But almost nobody is hired at this

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level.

Once in the civil service, most people stay (that's one reason it's so hard to be hired) and rise through the ranks through a similarly elaborate system of increases in pay and responsibility. Within each grade there are ten steps, each corresponding to a certain salary. Civil servants go through a series of step increases within their grades. In theory these raises are based on merit, but in practice they are awarded routinely to everyone but the most spectacularly incompetent. (Karen Elliott House reported recently in *The Wall Street Journal* that of one million eligible for merit raises last year, only 600 didn't get them.) In addition, each civil servant is on what's called a "career ladder" that provides a series of grade increases. Rising to the top of the career ladder is standard and expected, again except for complete incompetents. Pay in the civil service depends completely on grade and step.

Then there are competitive promotions—promotions beyond the upper limit of the career ladder, for which there is a real application and winnowing-out process. When a manager doesn't want to take whoever the Civil Service Commission gives him, he writes up a description of the job that's open and publishes it, so that civil servants throughout the bureaucracy can apply. The applications go to a panel of managers in the agency, which can't include the person who announced the job. The panel evaluates the applicants according to the usual quantifiable factors, plus ratings by superiors, and comes up with a list of the qualified. The list goes to the person who announced the job, who chooses someone from the list. The point of the panel is to prevent favoritism.

There are a few official small deviations from the pure merit principle in the civil service's selection procedures, deviations that are common in American meritocracies. For instance, applicants are asked if they have ever belonged to the Communist Party. And there are geographical distribution requirements that make it tough to get a job in Washington if you're from Virginia or Maryland.

There's also one major deviation, called veteran's preference. Since before the Pendleton Act there have been provisions for favoring veterans in federal hiring. In 1944 Congress passed the Veterans' Preference Act, which consolidated and increased this favorable treatment. Veterans who've passed the PACE examination get five points added to their scores. Disabled veterans get ten points. Equivalent advantages are offered at the higher hiring levels. As a result, veterans are at the top of most of the Civil Service Commission's hiring lists, and because of the Rule of Three they usually must be hired. Frequently a veteran who gets hired has a total score, including preference, of more than 100 points. Rewarding veterans for service to their country may be noble in a large sense, but it's certainly not meritocratic; being a veteran doesn't often improve one's technical qualifications for a government job. The veterans' preference is a particular *bête noir* of upper-level federal bureaucrats, who feel it prevents them from hiring the best qualified people. Lately, it also has come under attack for being discriminatory against women. A recent lawsuit challenging the veterans' preference on this basis made it all the way to the Supreme Court before being shot down. The Court's action came just a week before it heard arguments in the Bakke case, which concerned preferential treatment for minorities in admission to a state medical school. It is interesting to compare these two situations. In both cases the principle of merit has been sacrificed in order to serve another social goal: increasing the number of minority-group doctors, or rewarding those who have served their country. Yet the veterans' preference is virtually immune from criticisim, while preference for minorities is our leading domestic controversy.

Another departure from the merit principle is a device called the "name request" which circumvents the complex civil service mechanism and reintroduces hiring by connections. Under the name request system, a bureaucrat who wants to hire someone in particular can send the commission that name and ask that it be sent back on the qualified list. The commission checks to make sure the requested person is indeed among the most qualified. The name request system used to work almost all the time. As recently as 1970, 52 percent of the people hired at the junior level and 71 percent of those hired at the middle level were name requests. It's easy to see why the name request system is popular among bureaucrats. Besides the ignoble desire to hire one's friends, there's a perfectly reasonable inclination to hire someone whose work you know and trust over someone you've never met. And now the bureaucrats are chagrined because the Civil Service has tightened up on name requests. Last year and the year before, only 12 percent of the junior level hires were name requests. As the people in the agencies see it, it's either name requests or veterans.

Affirmative action in the civil service works the way it's classically supposed to: there is much effort expended in attracting minority applicants and making sure job requirements don't include the kind of experience that minorities, as past victims of discrimination, would be unlikely to have. But there are no quotas, and minority-group members don't get any extra points just because of their race.

The other promotions and raises, as in many other organized employment meritocracies, are not competitive or merit-based at all, but practically automatic. And perhaps least meritocratic of all, after a probationary period of a year civil servants have tenure. This means in theory that they can be fired only for cause. In practice, because of the horrible and time-consuming complexity of proving "cause", they can't be fired at all as long as they don't have their hands in the till. The statistics are a bit cloudy, but it appears that less than

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one-seventh of one percent of tenured civil servants lose their jobs against their will each year. The idea of meritocracy implies tough competition every step of the way, constant reward of hard work and weeding out of the lazy or incompetent. But in the government—as in universities, law firms, foundations and most big businesses—there's tough competition for a little while, followed by almost absolute security. Job security was considered one of the civil service system's great triumphs. In the government as elsewhere meritocracy and tenure, two concepts seemingly at complete odds with one another, go hand in hand. The link between them implies that the real goal of large, established meritocracies is distributing rewards to the people within them, rather than producing the best results for the people who pay the salaries. Thus meritocracies tend to be intensely competitive at the point where people enter them, but secure thereafter, like an overcrowded banquet where you have to fight to get a seat but can feast in peace once seated.

As in a banquet, the selection of the gourmands is not thought likely to affect the quality of the meal. The real question is who gets to eat. It's most important that that decision be made fairly, according to who deserves the banquet most—any favoritism would run counter to the American democratic ideal. Thus meritocracies gravitate toward completely objective selection criteria even when those criteria have only a hazy relationship to the job being filled. They shy away from any subjective standards smacking of personal connections.

For example, in the government meritocracy politics has always been seen as the sworn enemy of merit. And indeed when it means corruption and a complete lack of continuity in the federal service it's not very meritorious. But assuming those defects can be taken care of, isn't there merit in federal employees feeling a loyalty and responsibility to the electorate, and knowing that if they do a bad job the electorate will fire them? Those parts of the federal government where the spoils system still prevails, where political connections are everything—the staffs of Congress and the White House—are clearly more efficient than the meritocratic civil service

But maybe that's not the point. Meritocracy in the federal service no longer means finding a way to run the government efficiently. It means presenting the considerable gift of federal employment to those who most deserve it. And for those who are deemed to deserve it, federal employment is a feast indeed.

The Seven Deadly Sins Today, VII

Sloth or Acedia

by Henry Fairlie

By sloth in our everyday idiom we mean only idleness, and there is much in certain kinds of idleness that is attractive, and may even be useful. But the sin of Sloth is a state of dejection that gives rise to torpor of mind and feelings and spirit; to a sluggishness of will; to despair, faintheartedness and even desirelessness. Sloth is a deadly sin because it is "an oppressive sorrow which so weighs upon a man's mind that he wants not to exercise any virtue." It can even sorrow in the divine good, instead of rejoicing in it. In pathology, sloth means a morbid inertia and, by transference, it means the same spiritually. In all of these aspects it is peculiarly an affliction of our time, much more prevalent than it seemed to the medievial theologian.

Our popular speech is today full of phrases that suggest an indifference and apathy that amount to emotional and spiritual torpor. Hang loose! I can dig that, man! Play it cool! That's heavy! Don't get uptight! There is Sloth in all of them. Nothing is worth getting very serious or concerned about, except one's own wants at the moment in one's own immediate environment. I'm OK. You're OK. So what reason is there to worry? "In the world it is called Tolerance, but in hell it is called Despair," said Dorothy Sayers. "It is the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, loves nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die." As each generation in the modern age has followed deeper in the footprints of its predecessors, this description has applied to it with continually more accuracy and force.

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Drawing by Vint Lawrence

Most of the recipes of the "human potential" movement for personal relationships and "self-actualization" are prescriptions for emotional and spiritual Sloth. Life is reduced by them to a thing of Passages from meaningless "now" to meaningless "now", each to be negotiated with just enough precautionary effort to avoid all but the slightest difficulty and pain. Our lives are made into a succession of episodes, in which any fulfillment or happiness will be largely an accident, at best a coincidence, and in either case will be of little account to us or to anyone else. In fact, we can give only the barest account *of them*, for there is to be no narratives to our lives, no intelligible threads running through them; and at the same time, they are stripped of all but the most slender association with the narratives of our societies, since we are persuaded to live apart from them, in the little oases of our selves. Such are the "human potential" and "self-actualization" that are recommended: lives that have no personal history—only a succession of masks fitted to ever changing roles, lived amid an environment that has been denuded of human history.

The name for such a condition is Sloth, and perhaps what is most dispiriting about our age is not merely that we're persuaded that this is how we should be, but that the voices raised against it are so weak and timid. Even those who might teach us to live strenuously are fainthearted. Schoolteachers themselves have become slothful. They have abandoned the painful task of combating the natural idleness of their pupils, and instead let their little victims play at what they will. From cradle to grave, life is to be avoided by therapies. We should think hard why the phrase "learning experience" has been found necessary. By learning we mean that something is learned. When we say, "I learned this today," there is a measure by which to test its accuracy and value. What has been learned, something objective outside ourselves, is what counts. But when we say, "That was a great learning experience I had today," we mean only a rather vague and superficial response in ourselves. We are talking merely of a subjective feeling, a form of self-indulgence and self entertainment. We are turned in to delight in our own experiencing, rather than out to the obstinate fact of something other than ourselves. This also is Sloth.

We can put beside our own weak voices one that is stronger with a stronger prescription. "I cannot answer the question, 'Who am I?' except in terms of some sort of statement of the plans and purposes of my life," said the American philosopher Josiah Royce 70 years ago in *The Philosophy of Loyalty*. "I should say that a person, an individual self, may be defined as a human life lived according to a plan. . . . Wherever there is personality, there are purposes worked out in life." He acknowledged that "every man inevitably finds himself as apparently occupying the centre of his own universe. . . . Yes, the entire and infinite visible world, to be even more exact, seems to each of you to have its centre about where the bridge of your own nose happens to be." As such individuals, we seek happiness. "Happiness involves the satisfaction of desires," but our "natural desires are countless and conflicting. What satisfies one desire defeats another." We therefore need to be enabled to choose between them—to learn to know our own will, and how to exercise it—and for this

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we need a plan and purposes. But where and how can we find them?

"Since no man can find a plan of life by merely looking within his own chaotic nature, he has to look without, to the world of conventions, deeds, and causes. . . . Only a cause, then, an absorbing and fascinating social cause, which by his own will and consent comes to take possession of his life. . . . only such a cause, dignified by the social unity that it gives to many individual lives, but rendered also vital for the loyal man by the personal affection which it awakens in his heart, only such a cause can unify his outer and inner world." And he invokes us in conclusion: "Seek, then, serenity, but let it be the serenity of the devotedly and socially active being. Otherwise your spiritual peace is a mere feeling of repose, and, as such, contents at its best but one side of your nature, namely, the more sensuous side."

Royce had not read the literature of "human potential" and "self-actualization," but he had forseen it, and anyhow it was already in the air: ". . . a mere feeling of repose . . . but one side of your natures . . . the more sensuous side," these phrases do not only summarize where we have arrived, 70 years later, they are more and more what our societies choose to celebrate. "I do my thing and you do your thing," runs what Donald Heinz has called "the misty-eyed Gestalt prayer" of Fritz Perls: "You are you and I am I, and if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful." This is the human potential we are to actualize! This is to be the extent and depth of our awareness, of ourselves and of others whom *we find*! It is Sloth as a way of life.

Royce was criticizing a false concept of individualism which he saw growing around him, and 70 years later we can see how deeply this distorted idea of our selfhood has taken root. We must confront it unforgivingly, because it is causing havoc in our societies, and therefore in our own lives. It is the individualism of the bourgeois, given the same rationalizations as before, but with a twist that we could not have expected. Its first commandment is that we should "look after Number One." The twist that follows is the result of our affluence. The bourgeois two generations ago—say, Babbit—still needed some of the institutions of society, so he took their morality as his own, and willingly and with his consent gave at least his outward loyalty to them and to what they preached. But in an age of plenty, the bourgeois acknowledges not even those obligations. "Looking after Number One" has been given the formidable reinforcement that one can now live entirely by, with, and for oneself, and above all *to* oneself, barely even needing a vocabulary to communicate, since one is seldom addressing anyone but oneself. "I am I, you are you" or "I'm OK you're OK," are profoundly self-centered and self-indulgent statements, which in effect tell the "you"—the Other—to get on by itself, and the relationships they foreshadow are slothful.

Peter Viereck once drew a portrait of the son of Babbit, whom he saw about him in the 1950s, bitingly calling him Gaylord Babbit, and a generation later we have Babbit's grandson and grandaughter. In the quarter of a century that has elapsed, the slide away from any idea of guilt, or of gravity in pursuing some purpose in our lives, of commitment to someone or something other than ourselves and our immediate wants, or of sacrificing even our peace of mind for them, has continued at so pellmell a speed that the rush of the swine down the Gadarene slope seems like an amble. If one goes back to Babbit, he seems a more understandable if not more sympathetic character than before. Many of his arguments with his children were between one generation which had known when money kept its value and another generation which sensed that the value of money had been underminded forever. Babbit himself sensed this, which is one reason why he sputtered and declaimed, and many of his defenses of old values and institutions now seem tragic rather than pathetic, because he knew that they had been undermined in their very citadel, as he believed it to be, by the first taste of indiscriminate plenty, and the first geological fault in society that was caused by permanently inflationary pressures. How to preach the virture of thrift, say, to those who knew it would earn no reward?

There is now no "we" in our vocabularies. "I'm OK, you're OK" and "I am I, and you are you" both preclude the existence of any "we." They cannot be translated into the plural. Even the family is no longer a "we," but an exercise in therapy for the self-centered egos of each of its members. It has been said that what we find in all the sins is lovelessness. They are a condition in which it has become inconceivable that most people will surrender themselves—willingly and with their own consent—to some cause or calling or some other person in which or in whom they find an unconditional value. This is a breeding ground of Sloth.

We are not speaking only of the young, who have merely taken their elders' sluggishness of feeling and spirit all too logically to its inevitable conclusion. But we may say this of the face of Sloth: that at any age it is the face of those who are old beyond their years, who seem never to have known any springtime, whether in their own lives or around them each year, in whom the sap seems never to have risen. Even in those who should be reaching the Mayday of their lives, if Sloth has taken root the eyes are already downcast with their own emptiness of spirit, the mouth is already slack with lack of purpose either to speak or to embrace, and in its flesh are already the intimations of fold upon fold of the worldweariness which it seems to have known since childhood.

The picture is overdrawn, it may be said. It will seem over-drawn only if it is thought that Sloth cannot often take the form of what Dorothy Sayers said was one of its favorite tricks, "to dissemble itself under the cover

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of a whiffling activity of body." The sudden popularity of outdoor sports—on the tennis court or the golf course, carrying surf boards to the sea, and then carrying them back again, even just jogging—is evidence of a society whose members imagine that they are being strenuous when they are engaging exactly in only a whiffling activity of body; and only individuals who have been reduced or reduced themselves to a state of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual Sloth could imagine that they are engaged in anything but a desperate escape from the inertia and dejection that would overtake them if they could not so distract themselves by an exaggerated but meaningless attention to their bodies.

What lies behind it all? For we are here on the edge of each of the other sins as they are manifest in us today, able to see why Sloth is today so deep and widespread, and deserves to take its place next to Pride. Behind it there lies a series of rationalizations, of which perhaps the most alluring and destructive is the belief, which our culture has inculcated in us, that the evil of the world and of our societies is so great that there is little we can do to combat it. The evil, it must be noticed, is out there, not in ourselves; and out there it is an evil so great and so encompassing, so certain to bring everything to destruction and death, so without hope of any redemption, that we may excuse ourselves from any fruitless concern with it, any trifling recognition that our own evil may contribute to it, any foolish effort to reduce it, contain it, or overcome it, and retreat instead into our own private pursuits, persuading ourselves that at least in them the half-hearted efforts of our own spineless human love will be enough to get by, the love that we have made spineless by our own self-centered trivialization of it.

Creation is evil, condemning us to die. The world is evil, full of destruction. Life is absurd, since we all end underground. So we will stay in our oases, and cultivate our Sloth. The evil of our societies, embedded in institutions so big that we cannot hope by our efforts to control them, is beyond our concern or correction, and again we retreat to our oases. Thus our Sloth is doubly armed, for nothing is redeemable but our own massaged selves; there is health in us, but in nothing of which we are part. The excuse for Sloth is complete. To say that our societies sin, as has been argued throughout these essays, is not the same as saying that they are beyond redemption; and how even greater a fault it is in us, to look upon the wonder and goodness of creation, and be obsessed by the fact that some day we must leave it. Who's for tennis? In at least its courts, we will serve.

But our Sloth has not done with its exemptions. By exaggerating the evil of all but our own selves, it incites us to fall back on an innocence that has no justification in fact, and that again stirs us to no strenuousness of effort, for such evil as there is in us is of creation's doing or society's doing, and anyhow we may exercise it by therapies, and by talking trivially about it amongst ourselves. Almost all of the recipes of the "human potential" movement offer only appeasements. We become better by using the unstrenuous prescriptions of transcendental meditation in place of coffee breaks. We gather in groups which have no other life than themselves, and no association with any other parts of our lives, to earn the benevolent endorsements of therapy, which asks very little of us except that we should ask very little of ourselves. We reduce our desires, in order then to persuade ourselves that we have satisfied them, for one of the most beguiling of temptations, as Spinoza said, is to entertain desires for only part of our whole natures, and desires only for the present and not the future.

Sloth is eating at us, devouring all inclination to continue the human endeavor at even the level which has been sustained in the past. For we are reaching the stage at which we will no longer regard ourselves as part of that endeavor. We barely know our civilization any more. We do not read the ancients. Even the classics of our own literatures are becoming closed books to us. We make little or no effort to understand our science, with the instructions it has to give and the wonders it has to show. We allow no authority to the past, and entertain no obligation to the future. We do not observe the rules of grammar or syntax. We disdain our dictionaries and let our vocabulary grow slack. We think we can communicate without speaking accurately, and even without speaking at all in any language that is complex and discriminating. We will rely on touch and feel, and the human race will end its long caravan across the centuries as a speechless race of touchy-feelies. We think that we can think even without the process of thinking. And we think we are not slothful?

Children are too idle to obey. Parents are too sluggish to order. Pupils are too lazy to work. Teachers are too indolent to teach. Priests are too slack to believe. Prophets are too morbid to inspire. Men are too indifferent to be men. Women are too heedless to be women. The sexes are too bored to engage each other. Doctors are too careless to care for their patients. Shoemakers are too slipshod to make good shoes. Writers are too inert to try to write well. Street cleaners are too bored to clean streets. Shop clerks are too uninterested to be courteous. Philosophers are too faint-hearted to make philosophies. The faithful are too dejected to bear witness. And we think we are not slothful?

Of all the sins, Sloth is the nearest to having become a religion to us. We have faith in it. And what is most terrible about it is that, even in our slothfulness, we move across our landscape like a cloud of locusts, devouring everything by doing nothing.

Next week, Henry Fairlie's last deadly sin, Pride, will appear.

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Arts and Lives

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Strange Bedfellows

Salò, 120 Days of Sodom (Zebra). There's little more to be said, for a long while, about the Marquis de Sade. His long obscurity/excoriation was followed, inevitably, by a reaction of overpraise, and both sides have amply said their say. Most literate adults now know whether they consider him a heroic genius or a highly talented pervert. I don't contend that the truth lies somewhere between. I do contend that Sade has been turned into a more or less interesting relic by the literature—not by the Freudian science—of this century. That will never be said of, for instance, James Joyce.

It was also inevitable, it seems now, that Sade should have been brought to the screen by Pier Paolo Pasolini. Pasolini, after an auspicious beginning in naturalistic literature, began a film career with some excellent naturalistic films. His *Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, which I saw again earlier this year, is still the best film about Jesus that I know. Under the twin scourges of impotent radical political fury and the socio-sexual sufferings that (apparently) his homosexuality inflicted on him, his film work moved from naturalism into inflated symbolism, into a technicolor estheticism that often treated of the themes that still moved him but with an overripeness that suggested despair. It was as if he were now making his films this way because he meant to have some sensual satisfaction out of the very making of them, although he felt that his causes were hopeless.

As everyone knows, Pasolini was murdered in Rome in 1975, presumably by a youth to whom he made sexual advances. Shortly before his death he had finished *Salò, 120 Days of Sodom*, based on Sade's *120 Days*. With his long-time collaborator Sergio Citti, Pasolini wrote a screenplay that transferred the setting from the France of the early Louis XIV to the northern Italy of the elderly Mussolini, rescued and reestablished by the Germans in the so-called Salò Republic. The screenplay condenses the action of the book but keeps the form and intent. Three Fascist officials, instead of French royalists, and a bishop go to a huge villa with a group of abducted teen-age boys and girls who are trained and guided by four elderly bawds. (One of the bawds is played by Caterina Boratto who was the beautiful blonde stranger in *8½*.) There the four powerful men put the boys and girls through a program of degradations.

Sexual activities pure and simple—an apt phrase in this context—occupy very little time and are not nearly as detailed as they are in any grind-house porno flick. Much more detail is given to actions involving excrement and torture. I can't say that I actually saw every moment of all these acts: often I had to look away when I knew what was coming. I watched the audience; and they, your average New York East Side audience, watched without a blink. Only two people walked out. (On the box-office window was a large sign: No Refunds.)

The question of Sade's book aside, Pasolini's screen use of it raises some suspicions. First, just because the book pre-existed. The case is unique: the precedents of many thousands of filmed novels don't apply. When Pasolini decided to enact some of what's in this book, he knew at least as well as any critic could tell him that there's a wide difference between reading and seeing; and a difference—in this particular instance—between Sade's creation and a belated secondary use of that creation. Sade's anarchic blow for freedom, if that's what it was, had already been struck. One can't help suspecting that the re-use of the material was more for its details than for the overall aim of the details.

Sade, who spent 30 years of his life in various prisons, was protesting through sexual analogy against the power of the oppressors around him. What was Pasolini protesting against? The long-deposed Nazis and Fascists? Or was he protesting, by analogy, against the current oligarchy he hated? Well, power is power. Why wouldn't the analogy apply equally to the Gulag Archipelago or Mao's Cultural Revolution? I don't believe that the Communist Pasolini intended this. I don't believe he had any specific application in mind. I think he used the political charade that he adapted from Sade as a cover for an expression of the hate to which he had been driven: hatred of everything and everyone, certainly including the audience.

My deepest amazement at the film came from the reaction of the audience which, whatever they may have secretly thought, watched it all carefully and then went out as if they had been seeing *Cousin, Cousine*. "Human kind," says one of Eliot's most familiar lines, "cannot bear very much reality." But that's not the same thing as realism.

Short Eyes (Film League). Reviewing audiences is not, I know, reviewing films or plays; still I'm glad that I saw *Salò* in a theater instead of a screening room and I'm glad that I saw *Short Eyes* the same way. That second audience was quite different, with a large number of young blacks and Puerto Ricans, and they too had an unexpected reaction to their film. *Short Eyes* is obviously intended to be brutally cautionary, but they found it brutally exciting, and accompanied most of the brutality of action and speech with loud approval.

The film is based on a play that I

Films Worth Seeing

Julia. Lillian Hellman's memoir is too upholstered to be fully effective, but Vanessa Redgrave is glorious, Jason Robards fine, and Jane Fonda good.

Let Joy Reign Supreme. It very nearly does—ironically. By Bertrand Tavernier, who made *The Clockmaker*. The French court in 1720. Rich, intelligent, sexy, and generally subtle.

One Sings, The Other Doesn't. Two French women and the friendship that gives them strength to grow in their separate lives. The best film so far about New Women, warm with presence.

The Spy Who Loved Me. James Bond. For those in James Bondage, this is far from the worst.

SK

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reviewed when it was done at the Public Theater (*TNR*, Apr. 20, '74). The film-script was written by the playwright Miguel Piñero who, before and since the writing, has been arrested for alleged criminal activities, so he has first-hand knowledge of the Manhattan House of Detention where it all takes place.

"Short eyes" is the street term for a sexual molester of children. A short eyes, a white man, is put in a day room with a lot of other prisoners, mostly black and Rican. He's immediately loathed, and eventually his throat is cut—another horrible scene—by one of the few white men in the group. This violence against one kind of criminal by other criminals, intended as a parody of moral hierarchies, is well based in fact. Example: In the early 1950s William Remington, sentenced for perjury before HUAC about his Communist Party membership, was murdered in prison, apparently by a patriotic inmate.

The dialogue has the rhythm and jab of pungent street talk, but the film has the defect of being fiction. This was a fault of the play, and it's worse now in the medium of documentary, the film. Even if it were a documentary, what it has to say—about prisons and ghetto conditions—is hardly news, even bad news. Here it seems especially second-hand because it's *acted* and because the "plot" element, about the short eyes, is badly written, in a quite different style. And the play's attempt at irony has been simplified. The molester confessed to a Rican inmate. After he was murdered, all the inmates were told that he had been a victim of mistaken identity; but the Rican knew, and kept mum about the fact, that the short eyes was really guilty. The film severely plays down the last twist.

Most of the acting is of that very easy, swingy, explosive kind that so impresses *Baretta* fans. Robert M. Young has directed adequately, but the best feature is the sound-track by William Daly, a web of effects and off-screen speech that encloses the action.

Roseland (Cinema Shares International). A New York film by James Ivory, an American director who has done most of his work in India. The script is by the accomplished Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, so the idiomatic fidelity of the dialogue is remarkable—in a writer born in Poland who lives in India. But it's remarkable only because it was not done by a native: otherwise it's the most commonplace of real-life TV dialogue.

The stories of the three episodes match it. All three take place in the famous Roseland ballroom, all three are predictable and ineffectual heart-tugs, all three are much like warts-and-all TV plays that Paddy Chayefsky might have written for Maureen Stapleton at different stages of her career. Ivory directs them to suit. Only two performances are worth noting. Lilia Skala has some charm as an elderly devotee of the Peabody; and Christopher Walken, as a gigolo, is at last photographed well (by Ernest Vincze) and gets the chance to show one aspect of his extraordinary talents.

Why Photography Now?

In recent months one has been able to recognize a tense anxiety in many of the people in the photography community having to do with whether the considerable interest in serious, expressive photography, felt by a large segment of the educated public, will last. Is it a fad akin to those which may be consistently found in popular culture, or is this interest reflective of something more meaningful? Has it come too late? Is the medium acquiring an overly safe historical perspective and is this interest, or more accurately this acceptance of it as an art, the signal of the medium's own academicism and eventual demise?

This interest in photography may be seen to be reflective of the fact that people are deeply interested in science. Today they have turned to it in increasing numbers, not only for pragmatic solutions to physical problems, but also for a certain spiritualism. The church understands this and it is justifiably concerned. In this context photography, which at its most fundamental root is a scientific medium

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over which the artist exercises control, is seen by many to be the art form of the modern era. I am convinced that because of its understandable practicality and its austere, machine-made appearance photography is being appreciated today as a positive manifestation of modern scientific endeavor. The realism of the image is also an issue of consequence, in that this progressive sort of realist art is seen to be akin to scientific observation. Information gathering of every sort is the norm today and photography is a part of this apparatus of contemporary information systems. Even accepting it as an art has become assuredly without danger.

Man's role in the manipulation of science is becoming understood. Photography was never a theoretical science, but rather a practical technology. The earliest 19th century argument that photography was a kind of miraculous, self-operating art was replaced by the understanding that man had always been the manipulator of the process and this is now taken for granted. Moreover, in recent years photographers have been seen to be not so much artisans of a manipulated craft as they are now admired as social and esthetic commentators relying heavily on their powers of selection and significant presentation. After years of trial and error in making images and promoting them, the public has now come to recognize that the photographers who have done this are educated, intellectual and emotional beings whose values are to be respected and whose endeavors in the arts are akin to those who chose writing, painting, or musical composition all during these same years. That is to say, the expressive content in photographs has at last been perceived.

To select a subject for a photograph is an act of responsibility. Taking possession of a subject by photographing it immediately establishes an identity for the photographer. The public has ascertained these choices and we understand their stylization and their validity, and we have learned from them. Seeing photographs frequently, as one cannot help but do now in museums, commercial galleries, at the universities, and in the press, has created a fundamental revision of habits in thinking and feeling about the medium. Likewise, the frantic and transitory nature of the video image, most commonly seen as television, has increased interest in the still photograph, including the fostering of a nostalgia for old journalistic and documentary images, some of which were once the mainstay of the printed media. We can witness events live on television, but curiously it is not possible to reflect on these images. Such reflection is an aspect of our historical sense and likewise, may be seen to be fundamental to the documentary photographic esthetic.

A sense of history is a very large issue today. Interest in our past is at an all time high and the past which seems most vital and within reach is that which spans the photographic age, roughly since the mid-19th century. Historical and personality photographs are most in demand and apparently most deeply appreciated not only by collectors of the medium but by those persons interested in the picture as an artifact from a precious lost time. The fact that all photographs exist in the past must never be forgotten, and that the precise moment the picture is made is the decisive conclusion of the immediate present. The one thing a photograph cannot do is record the past—real or imagined. The medium operates solely in the present and its product instantly *becomes* the past in and of itself. This places the photographer at a unique position from which to project his commentary, but it is also one which demands revolutionary creativity. The power such a sense of image has over one is immense and, it seems to me, is the basis for so much of the interest in straightforward photography today. Contrived or manipulated imagery, out of the more painterly synthetic tradition, while of interest to an inner circle in photography, has less esteem with the general public because of the cliché of the recognizable and the scientifically direct.

In the 19th century the sheer abundance of photographic imagery and the pace at which it was created was immobilizing. It was something which could not be controlled, and for the intellectual community, accustomed to works of a more measured and reflective sort, photography was a threat to the established order. Quite apart from the favorable attention on the part of some artists and writers in observational or realistic art, the photograph, like so many advances in science and scientific thinking, undermined the prevailing value structure. Photography may be seen as the first true substitute for experiential reality. The photograph gave the illusion that what was in the picture was real and by experiencing it one could experience truth itself. Not only that, but the photographers believed that what was true, or at least apparently so, was also relevant and interesting. Instead of attempting to understand these interpretations more fully and to either accept or expose them, the intellectual community shied away altogether. Writing about photographs was pretty much left to those who also made the pictures.

At the beginning of this century Alfred Stieglitz attempted to change this, and in some measure during the years of his Photo-Secessionist organization, he was strikingly successful. However, beginning in the '20s when he sought to articulate his philosophy of photographic esthetics through his photographs which he called "equivalents," the world of self-conscious artistic photography again closed. Unfortunately this turn to estheticism had the reverse effect of essentially turning off for several years a great number of people, including perceptive critics. I believe that even though this school of photographic thought continues, two essential changes have happened to alter the general critical situation today. The first is the continuous evolution of the journalistic or documentary realistic photograph which, since the '30s, has been typified by the work of Cartier-Bresson and Walker Evans respectively. These artists have been generously promoted by major museums around the world and the clarity and apparent directness of their vision has liberated many from the prejudice of a narrow elitism for or against the medium. Their work, and that by the younger contemporaries who have followed them, has caused an enormous interest in the medium by critics and the public alike. A second occurrence, less precise, is that the literature of the more esthetic side of the medium has increased over the years, especially since World War II, and so has the reservoir of rich substantive imagery; for instance, that by Minor White, Aaron Siskind, and Frederick Sommer. Perceptive critics, sensing a meaningful evolution which was seemingly occurring without them, have now begun to express a serious respect for the medium in spite of some early hesitancies and, indeed, even a continued hostility toward the work of the Stieglitzian school. The important point, however, is not the opinion of these critics, but the fact that they have joined a kind of literati which always existed in the most inner circles of the medium and thus have closed a gap and brought

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photography into the arena of public concern and opinion. Commercial dealers were quick to follow on board when it was discovered that the public's interest, once encouraged, extended to the purchasing of actual images, and that this public which was being so impressed did not necessarily harbor the reservations of some of the critics, but tended to follow the guidance of the historical chroniclers who had identified the major figures in the development of the medium regardless of esthetic or stylistic persuasion. Collectors and curators are still largely following the age-old approach to self-confidence in such matters; that is, to select acquisitions from the list of historically established figures indexed in the most respected or widely read history texts. This situation should not surprise anyone who has similarly followed the rise in the postwar print market.

These same issues and manifestations which have appealed to critics and the public have attracted practitioners to the field. There are probably no more serious photographers working today than in the past, but through the vehicle of publication, of gallery and museum exhibition, their notoriety has increased. There used to be a strong sense of working in a precious, yet privileged vacuum. This situation has now been replaced with a certain pride in the medium itself, perhaps even a sense of political avant-gardism, which is pleasantly combined with the first opportunity to receive some monetary reward for their efforts. But in spite of these positive manifestations the photographic community still harbors an apprehension about it all. I think this is nonsense and that the state of the art is only now approaching maturity.

Peter C. Bunnell

Peter C. Bunnell is Director of The Art Museum and McAlpin Professor of the History of Photography at Princeton University.

Notes on Irving Penn

Once upon a time, fashion photography existed in a kind of esthetic demi-monde. Its practitioners were regarded as artists of easy virtue, accomplished in the arts of seduction, expert at inducing illusions of feeling, and utterly cynical in their manipulation of fantasy and artifice. As with other excursions into the demi-monde, one was permitted to enjoy the superficial pleasure it offered us—there was never any question, of course, that it was pleasure of a superficial kind—but it was not to be taken seriously, and it was certainly not to be considered respectable. Everyone agreed it was an essentially heartless and mercenary enterprise.

Lately, however, there has been a strenuous effort to persuade us otherwise. The demi-monde of fashion photography has suddenly been discovered to be a region of Parnassus, and its leading denizens figures of disguised but authentic virtue. Their canny artifice is now embraced as genuine art, and their worldly predilections forgiven—perhaps even admired—as a necessary strategy. Transferred from the world of advertising, promotion, and expensive taste to the higher and more rarefied altitudes of art, the fashion photographer has now emerged as a new hero—solemnized in the museums, elevated to academic rank, and seized upon by criticism as the very touchstone of achievement in a medium where standards remain open and adventitious.

This process was bound to have a profound effect on its principal beneficiaries. In the case of Richard Avedon, for example, it emboldened him to annex the world of political celebrity—now shrewdly perceived to be ripe for "decadent" treatment—to his already horrific universe of bloodless mannequins and decaying survivors of "society" and the arts. With Irving Penn, however, the process has stimulated a very different sort of ambition—to produce pictures so distant from the world of fashion, or indeed from any world that is inhabited by the human image, that they can be experienced only as the purest form of art.

To accomplish this end, Penn has been obliged to borrow from art itself—that is, from recent painting and sculpture—certain ideas essential to the realization of his esthetic program. From Jean Dubuffet and the esthetics of *art brut*, he has taken his cue in looking to the ruins of the gutter for his precious materials, which are precious (in this context) precisely because they are ugly, discarded, disfigured, soiled, and mere trash, and therefore useless—and perceived to be useless—for any but an artistic purpose.

The collapsed paper cups and dirty food wrappers and decaying cigarette butts in Penn's most recent photographs—already the subject of exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, and given the most prominent display in his large retrospective this fall at Marlborough Gallery in New York—are thus the offspring of an established pictorial tradition. In this tradition, mandarin taste redeems through the magic of art the "innocent" materials of the street, thereby reasserting the priority of sensibility over the objects of experience.

It was only (and literally) a step from the graffiti-inscribed cracks in the sidewalk that Dubuffet so successfully

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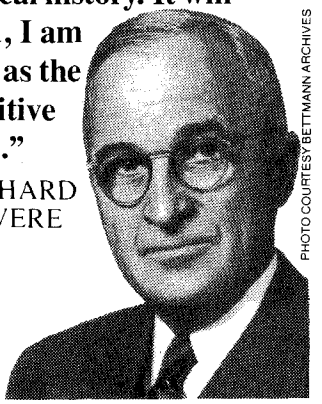

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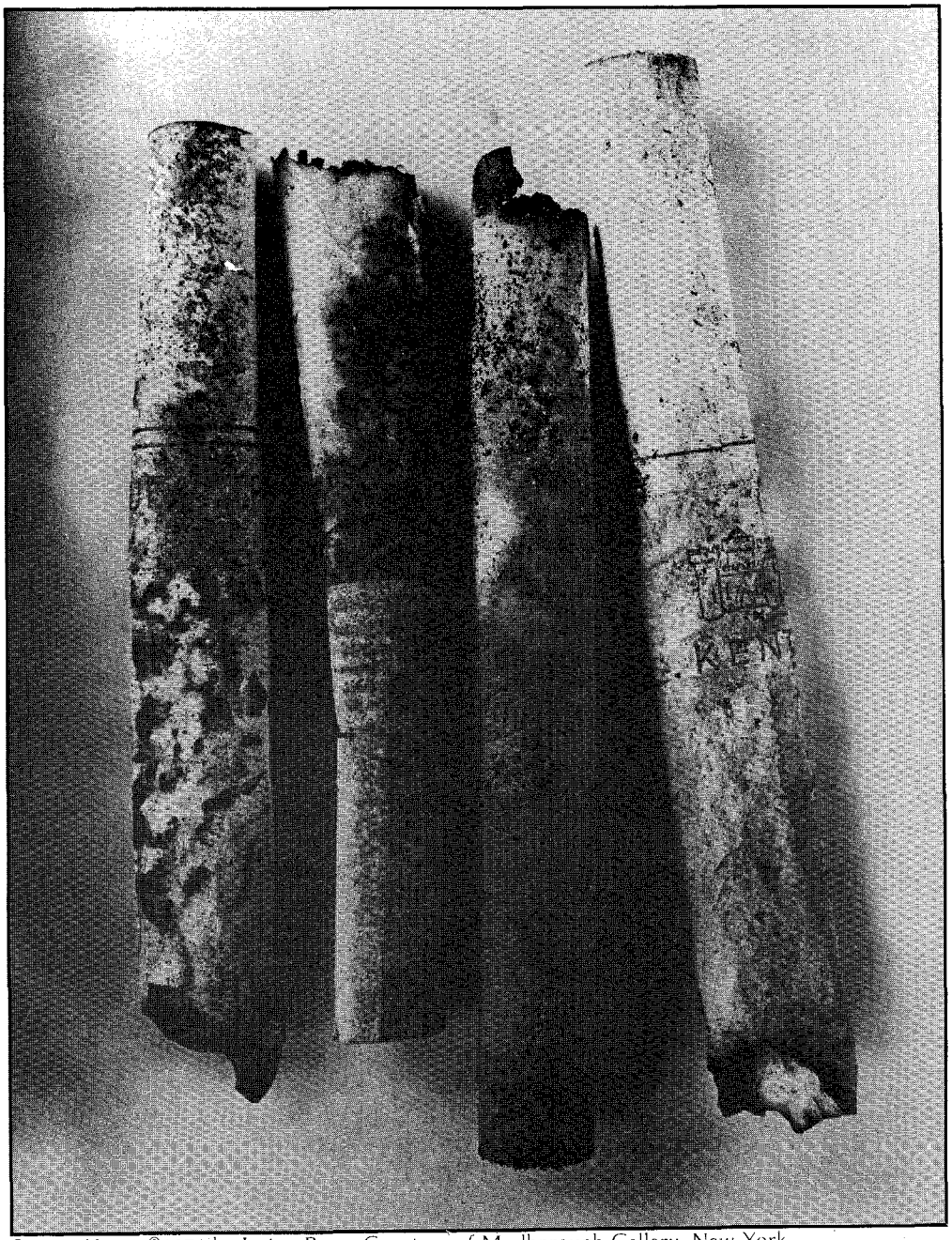

Cigarette No. 86 ©1974 by Irving Penn. Courtesy of Marlborough Gallery, New York.

carried over into his paintings to the treasurehouse of the gutter, but for Penn it was decisive, and not so much for what he found there as for what, in a sense, he lost. It freed him from the tyranny of his subjects—from the glamor and celebrity and pathos that dominated his earlier work. All his professional life Penn has photographed what he or someone else thought to be beautiful or eminent, exotic or otherwise appealing, and his artistry remained in one degree or another tethered to subjects that guaranteed our interest. In making his descent into the rubbish of the gutter, he was at last free—or so it must have seemed—to create an interest of his own invention.

Still, even the most abused cigarette butt or paper cup remains an object, and for purist art of the sort Penn now clearly aspired to, objects—while often necessary, especially in photography—are something of a problem. They must somehow be transformed, and made to seem, if not entirely expendable, at least ancillary or extrinsic. One obvious way to do this is to alter scale—to miniaturize the monumental, or, as Penn now did, to so isolate and enlarge a small object that it assumes a visual existence independent of its "true" reality. The artist in our time who has done the most to effect such changes of scale is, of course, Claes Oldenburg, with his clothespin monuments and giant hamburgers and lipsticks the height of a room. When, in confronting Penn's cigarette pictures and feeling that they somehow resemble the World Trade Center towers or the decaying columns of an ancient temple, what we are seeing first of all is the entry of the Oldenburg esthetic into photography.

This is not something that can be fully appreciated from seeing these pictures reproduced in a catalogue or a magazine. The actual prints are, in relation to their subjects, enormous—often 25 or 30 inches high. Significantly, these prints are larger than any of his photographs of people. The only thing that comes close to them in feeling, though they remain smaller in size, are the series of "Nudes" that Penn made in 1950, but these are not photographs of people either. They are pictures of forms, at times almost abstract, coaxed into a kind of sculptural monumentality by the elimination of both a "human" context—the cropped, isolated bodies seen in close-up are photographed as if they were stones—and the kind of modeling that makes the flesh palpable and sensuous to the eye. But even this dehumanized account of the nude could not quite meet the purist standard. The human form remains, even in the age of abstraction, remarkably resistant to total esthetic liquidation. On the slimmest visual evidence, the mind tends to restore what the eye has eliminated—something that Matisse understood, and counted on, in making his radical reductions of the figure in his late cut-outs. And the human body was, perhaps, too large an object encumbered with too many "artistic" associations to serve as the basis of esthetic absolute. Penn did not, in any case, stay with it long enough to find out.

The cigarette butt, once he discovered how to use it, was more to his purpose. The feeling engendered by these elegant and austere pictures of street trash is not easily described. As one entered the vast space of the Marlborough show, these were the first pictures that one saw, and there was something at once very familiar and very strange about them. They recalled, altogether involuntarily, those pictures of Egyptian pyramids and Greek temples and Indian shrines we know from 19th-century photography, not only in their monumental scale but in their uncanny evocation of an archaeological romance. Yet an archaeology of the gutter can

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convey nothing but esthetic information, and the attention that Penn lavished on refinements of "line, tone, shape and pattern," as John Szarkowski pointed out when he showed these handsome platinum prints at the Museum of Modern Art, made certain that this esthetic dimension would remain uppermost in our attention. This is what made them so strange and so seductive—that they could capture the romance of archaeology for a purpose so purely esthetic.

Everything else in the exhibition, which numbered 126 items covering a period of 27 years, was something of an anti-climax after this blitz of estheticism. The human element in Penn's pictures, always vulnerable to the extreme artifice he brought to them, seemed positively imperiled in this context. His portraits of celebrities, even the most famous ones of Colette and Picasso that are now museum classics, acquired a certain fictitiousness. One could see now, in this gallery of worldly glamor, that it was never character or personality that interested Penn but only fame itself, and it was *that* that he captured so masterfully. In his portraits of celebrities, he thus remained the quintessential fashion photographer, intent upon producing an icon in which all the contingency and commonplaces of experience are stripped away. This, of course, is what the fashion photographer has always been obliged to do—remove his subject from the real world, where clothes and the people who wear them have some contact with life, and relocate them in another, more ideal, more abstract realm where fashion itself is an absolute.

There is really only one series of pictures in Penn's entire work that escapes this tendency toward abstraction, and that is the series on workers in Paris and London that he made in 1950. In these pictures of a butcher, of pastry chefs and a cucumber merchant and a fishmonger and others, he poses his subjects in a space as "empty" and abstract as anything in his fashion pictures or nudes or celebrity portraits, and does everything he can to eliminate their "world" from our view. But the subjects themselves carry too much of that world with them for Penn to succeed completely in estheticizing them. They introduce something resistant to his refinements, and as a consequence these pictures have a tension and a pathos we do not often find elsewhere in his work. We are never given the identity of these figures, yet in a sense they are the only true portraits Penn has given us—the only portraits of character.

Everything else in his work, as we can now see, was a preparation and a rehearsal for his flight into the abstractions of the gutter. Fashion photography is itself, of course, a mode of abstraction that removes the beautiful from all contact with reality, but it is an unsatisfactory mode of abstraction since it is obliged to wear the disguises of reality. This the dishonored cigarette butt is no longer obliged to do. Discarded in the street, it makes its exit from the world of observation, and becomes at that moment the perfect *donnee* for an art that aspires to be purely itself.

Hilton Kramer

Hilton Kramer is art editor at the *New York Times*.

Books Considered

America & Lewis Hine, Photographs 1909-1940 with an essay by Alan Trachtenberg

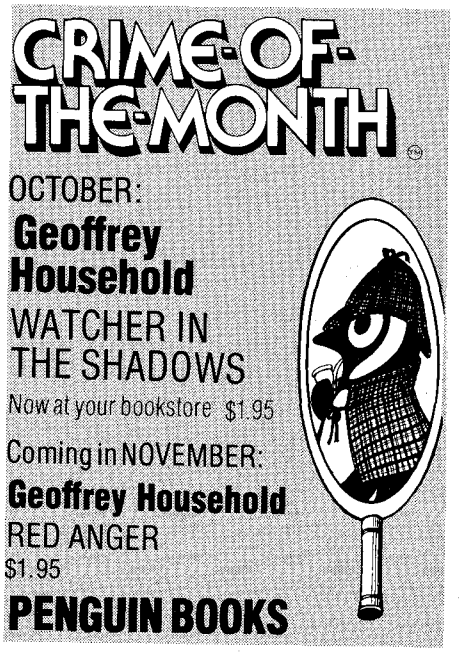
(Aperture; $22.50)

About the turn of the century, or perhaps a little earlier, there occurred in America a modest revival of Protestant conscience. Emersonianism as a distinct movement had long declined into feeble gentility, but there remained a strong Emersonian influence, often taking the form of a cultural incitement to scrupulous self-inquiry. It was as if serious young people had to brush past Emerson's legacy in order to reach his original impulse. But with this difference: that impulse now took the form of a turning outward toward social engagement, in the hope of bringing a word of solidarity to the poor of the cities.

Moral earnestness, personal selflessness, social dedication, but with a culture that now seems rather thin and provincial, as if insufficiently reinforced by European naturalism and modernism—these were among the elements of the revived Protestant conscience. One can see it in settlement house workers like Jane Addams of Chicago and Charles Stover of New York; in painters like John Sloan and his "ashcan" friends who in their pictures wanted to affirm the value of mundane sights; in reforming journalists like Lincoln Steffens and writers like Hutchins Hapgood who turned with generous feelings toward the immigrants; and in the Christian socialists who were preaching the social gospel.

It was this minority culture which seems to have shaped the attitudes and values of Lewis Hine (1874-1940), one of the pioneer photographers in America. Personally diffident, he was stubborn in his loyalty to photography as an art and the social betterment he hoped his pictures might help induce. Through almost all of his pictures there shines a deep-grained ethical concern which, by now, was about all that remained of Protestant conscience. While still alive Hine never received the recognition he deserved, though his pictures seem finer and stronger than those of the more celebrated Stieglitz. During his last years, in the 1930s, Hine was so badly off he had to apply for public relief.

America & Lewis Hine brings together a rich selection of Hine's photographs



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with a first-rate critical essay by Alan Trachtenberg which places Hine in the culture of his moment and evaluates his photographs as works of art. It persuades me of what students of American photography must have known all along: that Hine is a major American artist, worthy of comparison in his role as portraitist of native life with Edward Hopper, Theodore Dreiser, William Carlos Williams. Esthetically he doesn't have much in common with these three, but he shares with them a feeling for urban life and plebeian figures, thereby helping to record the historical era in which America becomes an industrial society.

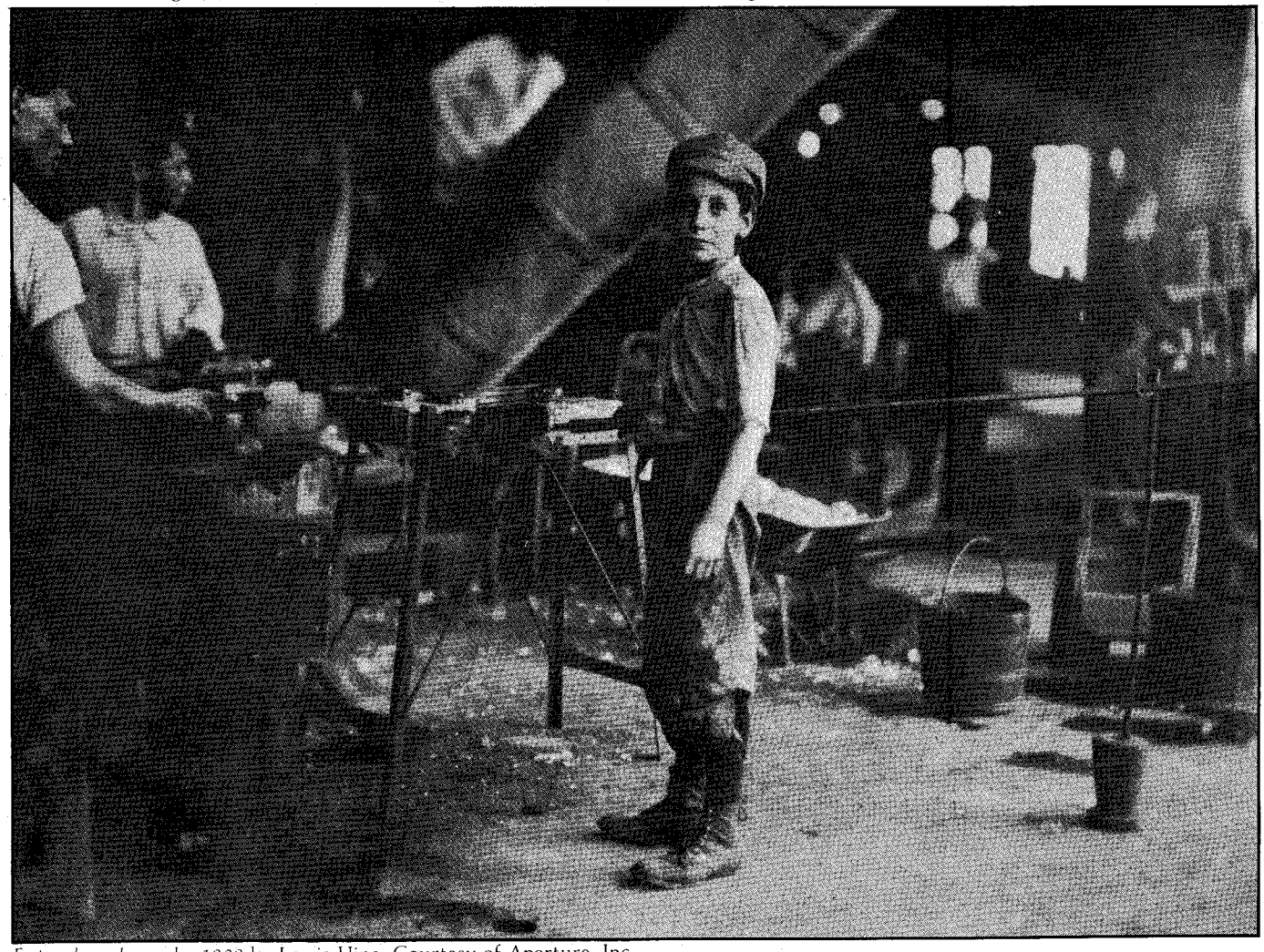
In his quiet, not-very-radical way (he seems not to have been especially influenced by Debsian socialism), Hine turned toward people who had to work for a living and suffer exploitation. Like Twain and Melville before him, he understood that America is a country where work is the ground of character, the shaper of life. For a time he served as photographer for reform groups seeking to end child labor in America—some of his most poignant photographs are of children working in mills and mines. He also spent much time at Ellis Island and on the immigrant streets of New York, picturing the bewilderments and dignities of impoverished newcomers.

In 1923 he wrote to a friend describing how he worked at Ellis Island:

Now, suppose we are elbowing our way thru the mob . . . trying to stop the surge of bewildered beings oozing through the corridors, up the stairs and all over the place, eager to get it all over with and be on their way. Here is a small group that seems to have possibilities so we stop 'em and explain in pantomime that it would be lovely if they would only stick around just a moment. The rest of the human tide swirls around, often not too considerate of either the camera or us. We get the focus, on ground glass of course, then hoping they will stay put, get the flash lamp ready.

It would have been fascinating to watch Hine do that pantomime of his before the swirling immigrants; perhaps one could have learned something about the mysterious gift that he had for reaching and reassuring plebeian feelings. In many of his pictures you see the faces of workers or immigrants—children making cigars, girls in a cotton mill, the switching crew at a freight yard, a Jewish girl at Ellis Island—as they respond with evident intensity, sometimes with a brooding passion, to photographer and camera. Through the "unique power of frontality," as Trachtenberg calls it, Hine encounters people at their occupation, most of the time photographing them not as they work but in a brief interruption. This moment of arrest is crucial to his pictures, for the people in them have been stirred or surprised into a sudden relationship with Hine, which also means a sudden revelation of self. The result is a stare of contemplation, marking the contemplativeness of people who are not supposed to be contemplative and perhaps don't even know they can be.

In Hine's pictures there is a strong element of "idealism." Not that he prettifies anything or that he solicits looks of piety or postures of militancy. I mean that he engages his subjects so as to bring about a spark of potential, some bruised, unknown treasure of humanity. He evokes in them an aura of thoughtfulness—what are they doing



Factory boy, glassworks, 1909 by Lewis Hine. Courtesy of Aperture, Inc.

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here? What is this life of theirs which this stranger with the camera wishes to capture? About all this Trachtenberg writes well:

His photographs do not break the rhythm of work but only interrupt it for a moment of reflection; they always allow the figure of the worker to dominate the instruments of his labor . . .

He allowed his subjects room for their *self-expression. This is something that cannot be taught, cannot be reduced to rules. As much as in any other aspects of his style, Hine's own character expresses itself in where he places himself* vis à vis *his subject. The camera set down before the subject opens a place, creates a scene in which the subject can stand forth and the camera can do its work of recording. Typically in Hine's pictures, the place of the picture is a social space in which individuality is defined, related, and expressed through the encompassing detail.*

For Hine, then, the camera is not a machine with which to create fine prints or pleasing compositions. Only rarely, as in some pictures of building construction which seem like skeletal anticipations of Franz Kline's black-and-white paintings, is Hine content with self-sufficient esthetic objects. Mostly, his art is mimetic and social, not by submitting meekly to the externality of phenomena but by seeking out inner human qualities and possibilities. The idea of potential is central to all democratic art.

So the ultimate effect of these photographs is not just to gratify the eye through compositional nicety, but also to affirm the value of human connection and aspiration. A little factory boy in a glassworks looks out at us in 1909 with a tender, wistful yearning, and though more than a half century has gone by, we still look back at him, wondering what strain of private reflection or social mood Hine has captured here.

Marvelous as the photographs are and illuminating as Trachtenberg's essay is, there is one thing about this book that requires complaint. The typographical design, with an excess of boldface type and irksome double rules between the columns, is aggressively unattractive. This is the sort of book in which everything should be perfect, and alas, not everything is.

Irving Howe

Irving Howe is the author of *World of Our Fathers* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).

Edward Weston Nudes
Sixty Photographs
Remembrance by Charis Wilson

(Aperture; $18.50)

Edward Weston was stricken with Parkinson's disease in 1948 and died 10 years later at the age of 72, which means that his last photographs were made a full generation ago and that some of his most famous have passed their half-century mark. A new book, *Edward Weston Nudes*, is composed of 60 photographs with a brief memoir by his second wife, Charis Wilson, who posed for a large percentage of them. Feeling, she says, "more like a historical monument than is quite comfortable," Charis Wilson finds that for the college students who ask her about Weston today, "Edward belongs with a past as distant as Brady or Daguerre."

As distant and, I found myself adding while first looking through this book, less viable—as far as the nudes are concerned. These are exquisite images, unspoiled by familiarity after all these years, and uncontaminated by the hundreds of proficient imitations and variations they have spawned. But I cannot help feeling that they represent the fulfillment of one concept of photography that is no longer vital, rather than a chapter that began with men like Daguerre and Brady and has grown richer and more exciting ever since. (Remember that we are talking about nudes, not Weston's photography in general.)

Say what you will, point to as many hybrids and borderline cases as you wish, and it will still be true that photographs fall into one of two classifications. Either they are art-photographs where first importance is given to inventive manipulation of the subject, or they are documentary photographs where the unviolated subject comes first even when the photographer—a photographer like Weston's contemporary, Lewis Hine—extends the documentary record into the field of revelation. And Weston's nudes are art-photographs. I am willing to risk the flat statement that they are the best art-photographs ever made, but art-photographs they remain

No one is going to love me for saying it, but there is less life in these photographs of beautifully posed living models than in the crudest Brady photograph of a soldier lying cramped and twisted in the haphazard attitude of death. Weston's nudes are a partial contradiction of his historical position, his insistence that photography, as "the most important graphic medium of our day . . . does not have to be, indeed cannot be—compared to painting—it has different means and aims," a premise that has become a cliché among photographers even when they don't observe it. In his earliest nudes, Weston

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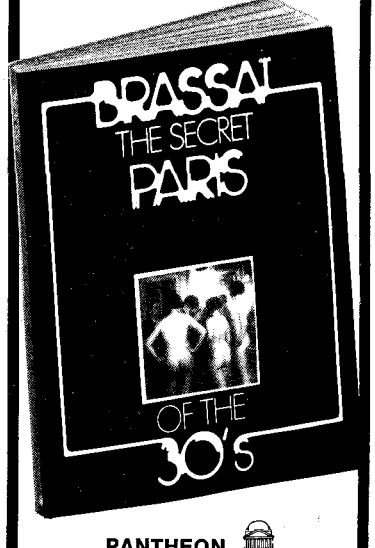

PANTHEON

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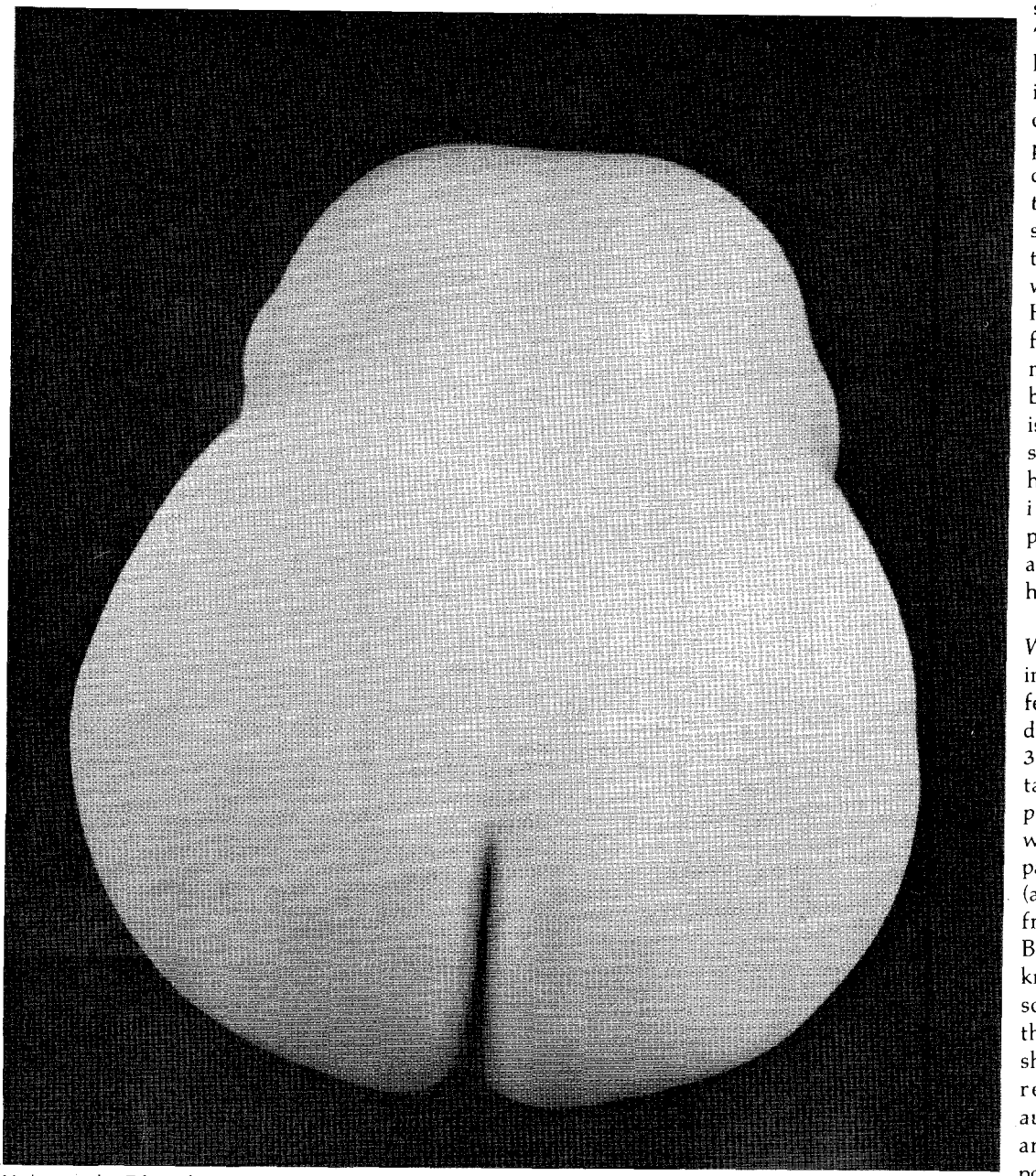
went in for gauzy effects derived from impressionist painting and precious Whistlerian-Japanesey arrangements of figure and background. A few examples are included in this new book for their retrospective interest. Obvious borrowings of this kind soon disappear, yet a fundamental relationship to the esthetics of painting (and sculpture) is undeniable in even the most "photographic" of the later work.

On one hand a great deal has been said about the sensuality of Weston's nudes, and on the other, just as much (and just as mistakenly) about his transformation of that sensuality into an area of philosophical abstraction. I don't see that either of these exaggerations, either way of trying to see these nudes, holds. Weston himself was sometimes given to highflown romantic philosophizing about the content of his art, and, we know, destroyed a series of notebooks in which he found his perorations embarrassing. Against all this I would balance a single instance, Weston's response to a new model, when, seeing her nude for the first time, there "appeared to me the most exquisite lines, forms, and volumes."

Lines, forms, and volumes as manipulated by painters and sculptors have been the components of art since ancient Egypt. The revolution of photography that sets it apart from other pictorial arts is that by recording un-manipulatable momentary images it can capture philosophical implications and varieties of emotional impact different from those that painters synthesize in images created by theory. The immediate image of a living moment transfixed by a lens in the service of an adroit and sensitive technician is the unique character of photography, which is weakened when it imitates the analytical manipulation of lines, forms, and volumes which is the traditional province of other arts.

Charis Wilson said indirectly what I have been trying to say when she commented, "I never really did think of these nude photographs as pictures of *me*. They were photographs by *Edward*—his perceptions and his artistry." Weston also observed about one of his nude series that they were "entirely impersonal, lacking in any human interest which might call attention to a living, palpitating body,"—a denial, to my way of thinking, of the supreme birthright of the photographer, which is to show, as Hines did, that each face, each body, in the multimillions of human beings who have lived, is indeed entirely personal, and filled with human interest, identifying a living, palpitating individual in a living, palpitating, human mass.



Nude 1925 by Edward Weston. Courtesy of Aperture, Inc.

The impersonality of Weston's nudes was impressed upon me a few years ago when I discovered—some 25 or 30 years after it was taken—that one of the photographs of a woman's back that I had particularly admired (and still do) was of a friend of mine, Anita Brenner. After all, I had known Anita in high school and off and on through the years when she was making her reputation as an authority on Mexican art and, as it turned out, posing for Weston, but I keep looking at this photograph and saying to myself, "That's really Anita? All that roundness, that abstraction of a backside to the form of a great pear-like fruit?" Anita just wasn't like that. She was a hard-driving intellectual with a vigorously featured face (hidden in Weston's

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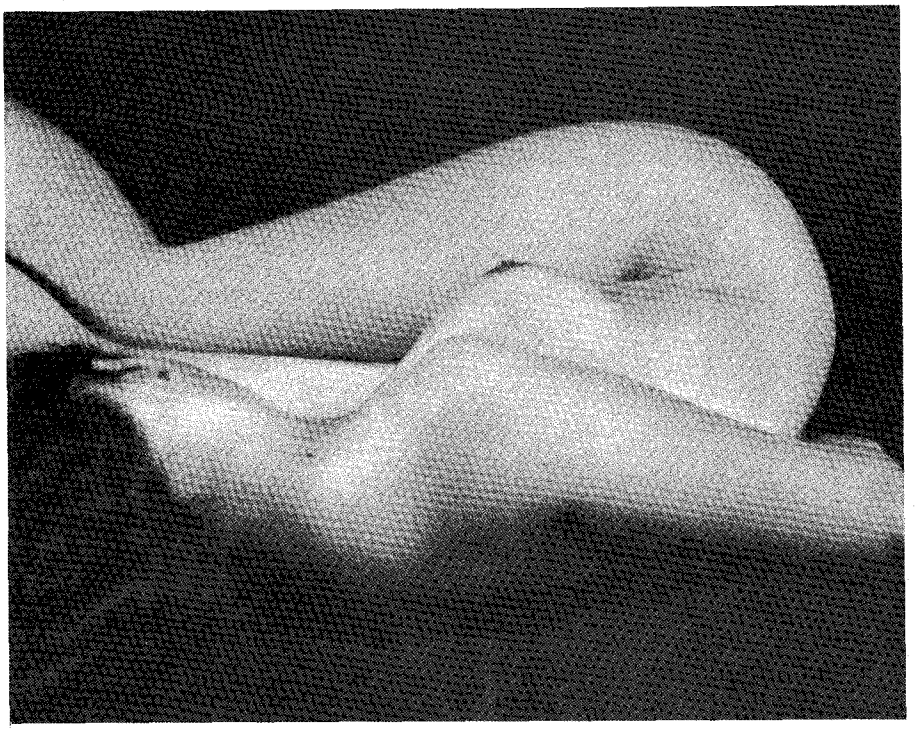
photograph) and nothing at all, in appearance, manner, or conversational gambits, could identify her with the process of lush, impersonal, mother-nature fertility and procreation with which Weston arbitrarily identified her.



Nude 1934 by Edward Weston. Courtesy of Aperture, Inc.

If the question is, "What's wrong with that?", the answer is "Nothing at all." Weston achieved what he was after in these nudes, and they continue to impress me. But if I have said that none of them has the life of one of Brady's dead soldiers, let me add that neither do they have the life of the fields, the dunes, the vegetables, that Weston photographed without reference to their precedents in painted images. It is, after all, quite something to have attained the apogee of art-photography and to have been as well the pivotal figure in liberating photography from exactly that limitation. Weston has a right to both titles.

Coda: *Edward Weston Nudes* is a handsomely produced volume. Charis Wilson's remembrance is poignantly evocative, and the book belongs in every library of photography.

John Canaday

John Canaday writes regularly on art and photography for *TNR*.

Places
Aaron Siskind Photographs

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25)

Formalism in photography isn't the same as formalism in the other arts. On sensitized paper the subject is too precise in its resemblance to reality to become totally abstract. Even the camera-less photograms (photographic paper directly exposed to light) made by Moholy-Nagy and Man Ray reproduce the texture and shape of their subjects in a way that never allows them to reach the level of abstraction found in contemporary painting. Photographs are steeped in the world even when they try to operate on other levels.

One result of the centrality of subject matter in photography is that, less than other arts, its audience is not forced to grapple with a world rendered in unfamiliar, abstracted terms. The art critic Leo Steinberg argues that formalism in painting is difficult for viewers to deal with because it seems to needlessly defamiliarize conceptions of reality.

> *Contemporary art is constantly inviting us to applaud the destruction of values which we still cherish, while the positive cause, for the sake of which the sacrifices are made, is rarely made clear. So that the sacrifices appear as acts of demolition, or of dismantling, without any motive . . .*

Formalistic photography may sometimes seem difficult, but it never can "dismantle" the world. The medium's rise to high art may be rooted in this fact; it generally offers itself to the viewer without making enormous demands.

Aaron Siskind's new book of photographs, boldly titled *Places*, is an excellent example of formalistic photography. His pictures are landscapes without broad panoramas or gorgeous open spaces. Microcosms of natural and urban landscapes are "places" for this artist.

Siskind began his career in the late 1930s doing documentary work in Harlem and later in a section of Martha's Vineyard. Since this early work he has moved on to a more abstract type of picture-making without forsaking these

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documentary roots. A close-up photograph of a decaying wall is as much a document of his life and his environment as the Polaroid snapshots which comprise ordinary family albums. Siskind's photographs are more than simply personal documents, however; they present the detritus of various cultures at a highly self-conscious moment. Time is always passing in these images. The poster is torn, the wall is peeling, and an old garden glove is hung as an artifact for posterity.

Coatzacoalcos 9 (1973) by Aaron Siskind. Courtesy of LIGHT Gallery, New York

In *The History of Photography* Beaumont Newhall characterizes the development of the photographic medium since 1910 by delineating four distinct trends: "straight" photography, the formalistic, documentary, and the "equivalent." Whatever the usefulness of such classifications, the task of defining modern photography is hardly this simple. The basic problem is that very few photographers, and certainly no photographers of real stature, are so easily pigeon-holed. Edward Weston, while taking a "straight" approach to the medium, used photographic vision to discover formal properties which normally escape our eyes. Paul Strand always believed that subject matter was of primary importance; consequently when one speaks of his straight approach or his formal presentation it must be done with an understanding of the documentary element in his work. In the case of Walker Evans it is now clear that the formal structure of his images sets his work apart from, and above, the purely documentary photographs of many of his contemporaries. And the work of Aaron Siskind is equally difficult to classify.

His images clearly are documentary in their intent. Yet, Siskind also subscribes to the "straight" esthetic which emerged in the 1930s. Using a large-format camera on a tripod, he allows the object before his lens to reveal its own significance. There is little manipulation or distortion in his pictures; instead he makes a conscious effort to re-present the texture and details which define his subject.

Photographs are intrinsically of and about something, and thus are steeped in the world "out there." Straight photography grew out of a recognition of this fact, and its proponents sought to capture the world on the other side of the camera lens with exactitude and clarity. Siskind does the same. And it is precisely this clarity which makes his work dynamic. In his straight pictures there exists a tension between the precision of the particular subject and a microcosm extracted from a larger reality. Although abstract, these photographs are realistic.

Siskind's photographs are also "equivalents." This term is an outgrowth of Alfred Stieglitz's now famous pictures of cloud formations, in which the reality presented stands as an equivalent for emotional states of the photographer. Siskind's images, while concrete and formal, are a means of defining his emotional relationship to the world. His symbols—his photographs — are not merely literal statements about the world; they also signify something about how he relates to an exterior reality.

Thus, Siskind expresses the photographic medium in all its potentialities: its ability to capture an object, to create a new reality through selection, to record, and to signify something other than itself. His work is formalist, certainly. Yet, his brand of formalism exists in tension with other approaches to the medium.

Siskind's work also represents an effort to re-explore what has become familiar. As such his photographs of walls and rocks and trees are a new form of travelogue, although here the journey is personal. In a way his work is a

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means of carrying himself into the future. He continually photographs the same or similar places, and thereby asserts his presence and forward movement in time. His pictures may take possession of the landscape, but he cannot; he keeps coming back, not satisfied with simply remembering. Thus, Siskind's travelogue is a way of continually re-experiencing the world.

However, it is not only the landscape itself that he attempts to capture but the experience of perceiving the landscape. Strand and Weston discovered their meaning in the concreteness of things, but it was a significance that emerged through the *process* of making pictures. Strand once said, "I don't have aesthetic objectives. I have aesthetic *means* at my disposal, which are necessary for me to be able to say what I want to say about the things I see." For Siskind the esthetics of the image, its formal properties, become an end rather than a means, for the picture space represents a very self-conscious statement about how the object before the lens strikes the mind behind the tripod. The experience of confronting the world is the essential factor. Thus, the formalism of Siskind's landscapes reveals as much about the man as it does about the subject.

Siskind often treats the landscape as if it were discarded junk, and in many ways his pictures of urban debris and decaying posters are a historical portrait of our age. Yet, formalism is Siskind's way of fighting back. He turns the chaos of randomly discarded things into a new reality, whose basic quality is order. So on one level his work is a social document showing change and decay, and on another level he transforms this disorder into an object of beauty and harmony. He tames the landscape.

William Drenttel

William Drenttel studied photography at Princeton, and works in advertising in New York.

Reconsideration

Harry Callahan

Last year was a big year for Harry Callahan. A retrospective exhibition of 200 of his prints opened at the Museum of Modern Art in December and, still traveling, it arrives at the Rhode Island School of Design this fall. Concurrent with the exhibition, Aperture (in association with the Museum of Modern Art) published a major monograph of the photographer's work (*Callahan*), edited and with an introduction by John Szarkowski, Director of the Department of Photography at the museum. The availability of so many prints spanning 35 years of a still-productive career provides a welcome opportunity to reassess the scope, and the quality, of Callahan's work—and it also raises significant questions about the standard methods by which his work has been interpreted.

Callahan's development has been problematic for photographic historians, and critics have seen his work as an unmanageable mélange. Owen Edwards, writing in *The Village Voice* last February, called Callahan "a wizard of odds and ends." Such a reaction to the range and variety of the work is understandable, for Callahan uses a number of techniques ("straight" photography, collage, multiple exposure, etc.); styles (delicate calligraphic patterns of grasses can be compared to hard-edged abstractions of telephone wires; rigidly formalist depictions of cityscapes can be contrasted with street photographs of people in motion); and themes (his wife Eleanor, city walls, Mexican villages and the Cape Cod beaches among them). Yet the fact remains that, when assembled, a body of Callahan's photographs holds together as a single-mindedly unified visual statement. The question is: how can a coherent interpretive method be formulated that will incorporate and illuminate all of the diverse elements that define Callahan's art?

Standard art historical methods are unsatisfactory when dealing with Harry Callahan's work. A chronological assessment of the photographer's development, for instance, is rendered ineffective by the obsessive repetitiousness of his imagery. Certain motifs (Eleanor, the city, natural landscapes) recur throughout the photographer's career, and the oeuvre tends to double back on itself frequently over the decades. "Weeds in Snow, Detroit" (1943), for example, is separated from "Weeds in Snow, Providence" (c. 1964) by 21 years. Both, however, depict an overall white field embellished only by curvilinear black lines, and both embody formal concerns that have occupied Callahan since his earliest experiments with the medium. Likewise, a discussion of the photographer's work in terms of the "influences" his images embody is bound to be frustrating. Callahan was familiar with Ansel Adams, Mies van der Rohe, Aaron Siskind, Todd Webb and Edward Steichen during his formative years, and references to the work of Stieglitz, Strand, Giacometti and Miró, among others, are evident in specific photographs. But together these influences don't explain the fundamental unity of the photographer's expression; as John Szarkowski noted in the introduction to *Callahan*, "it is difficult to be confident that any one of them significantly affected Callahan's art."

Earlier exhibitions and monographs of Callahan's work have attempted to organize the pictures into technical or thematic groupings, and such methods tend to limit the scope of the photographer's achievement. *The Multiple Image:*

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Photographs by Harry Callahan, edited by Gordon Martin and Aaron Siskind, for instance, focuses on one fragment of the artist's production and therefore cannot provide a context for the many motifs that appear in "straight" photographs as well as multiple images. A comprehensive selection of prints (*Photographs: Harry Callahan*) published by the El Mochuelo Gallery (1964) with an introduction by Hugo Weber, divides the oeuvre into five roughly thematic series: Eleanor, cityscapes, city dwellers, multiple exposure and other images primarily reflecting the urban milieu, and nature studies. The Museum of Modern Art's previous monograph, *Harry Callahan*, with an introduction by Sherman Paul, modifies the El Mochuelo groupings by compartmentalizing the work into three explicitly specified categories: Eleanor, The City and Landscape.

These three classifications are justified by Paul's essay, which seeks to isolate and explicate three distinct modes of expression in Callahan's work. According to Paul, Eleanor, "the eternal feminine," represents the antithesis of the "spiritual poverty of the city," which in turn is "redeemed" only by the "beneficence of life" in nature. But Eleanor, after all, dominates the city in some multiple exposure pictures and the natural landscape in others. Conversely, in several images she is overshadowed by the geometric structures of urban architecture or the vast emptiness of sandy beaches. Paul's rigidly simple analyses of the photographs cannot absorb these cross-references; his definitions obscure—indeed, deny—the complex interrelationships that exist between the prints in all three categories. Any narrow interpretation of Callahan's work can only impede critical understanding of the photographer's multi-faceted accomplishment—what is needed is a methodology that is expansive and holistic rather than divisive and exclusionary.

Such an approach to the work is exemplified by Szarkowski's editorial selection and arrangement of prints in the recent monograph. The photographs are displayed in one continuous progression; no groupings or divisions obstruct the flow of imagery. And the dominant motifs of Callahan's work recur throughout the book in varied combinations with images whose subjects are quite different.

In one series, for instance, a stark black-and-white picture of trees in winter is followed by an image of an upright weed and several linear designs formed by the crossing of telephone wires against the sky. All of these photographs, which become more and more abstract as the series progresses, depict black objects against a white field. This relationship is suddenly reversed, however, by the appearance of a road, deep in shadows, whose singular white stripe rises into the distance like a "zip" across the canvases of Barnett Newman. Similarly, photographs of Eleanor in natural settings precede intricate studies of tangled branches that fill the picture plane; the curvilinear patterns of the branches are then contrasted with the dense clusters of bricks in a wall and the rhythmic arrangements of rectangular shapes that compose the abstract collages of the 1950s.

Cape Cod, 1972 by Harry Callahan. Courtesy of LIGHT Gallery, New York

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By organizing the prints visually rather than thematically, Szarkowski has illuminated the single thread that unifies Callahan's entire oeuvre: whether single or multiple exposure, black-and-white or color, straight prints or collages, all of the photographs are constructed with the same pictorial coherence. Callahan's formalism is insistent—but it is never predictable. In some of the prints, single objects or figures are centered; in others, asymmetrical relationships are weighted and balanced. In still others, overall designs decorate a flat rectangular field. It is only when a body of work is assembled that structural patterns begin to emerge. And, by transcending the limits of technical and thematic groupings, these patterns assert themselves as the cornerstones of Callahan's photographic expression.

A comparison of three prints dated 1942, 1954 and 1972 can illustrate this point. The first is a photograph of a leaf taken in Detroit; the second depicts Eleanor and Barbara (Callahan's daughter) on the streets of Chicago. The third is an image of a volleyball net that stands, unused, on the beaches of Cape Cod. Despite the chronological, geographical and thematic contexts that differentiate the photographs, all of them are similarly structured: a single object (or group) is centered within a much larger field. And the feeling of distance and isolation that results from these pictorial relationships is communicated by all three pictures. Likewise, the walls of Peruvian villages, the seascapes of Massachusetts, and a row of tiny beach houses beyond a grassy knoll embody relationships of horizontal planes that are almost indistinguishable when seen through Callahan's eyes. The viewer is asked to recognize, not the peculiarities of an individual subject, but the expansive and yet oppressive sense of vastness that pervades one man's subjective universe.

These insistent pictorial relationships take precedence over subject matter as the expressive medium in Callahan's art. Subjects are generalized by the web of patterns and textures that the artist weaves into his photographs; and when single images are seen within the context of the oeuvre, individual motifs become elements in a larger statement defined by the cross-references between superficially unrelated bodies of work. The portraits of Eleanor are as archetypal, and as impersonal, as the pictures of trees over which her body is superimposed in double exposures; the lines of her buttocks and torso create patterns whose delicate arrangements are as vital, and as anonymous, as the calligraphy of grasses atop a bed of snow. Storefronts in Peru are as devoid of local color as clapboard homes in Providence and as impermeable as brick-walled apartment buildings in Chicago. The people who pass through ancient walkways in Callahan's Mexico seem as isolated, and as incidental to their environment, as the urban dwellers who rush through the streets of New York or the beachcombers who romp on the shores of Cape Cod.

Thematic variations in Callahan's work are not divisive; on the contrary, by expanding the range of the photographer's concerns, they emphasize the single-minded consistency of his vision. Callahan's commitment to that vision has allowed him to transmute a lifetime into a rich and multi-faceted series of images. He deserves nothing less than a critical approach that acknowledges the continuity—and the diversity—of his photographic expression.

Shelley Rice

Shelley Rice is a contributing editor of *Photograph* magazine.

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TRB, *from page 2*

forces for such emergencies. At Entebbe, at the Dutch railroad train and now again at Somalia, the spectacular surprise attack was successful; the need is for sudden weapons that blind and stun.

The worst thing that could come out of Somalia would be the idea that the problem has been met. The more that society becomes mechanized the more vulnerable it is to urban, guerrilla-style terrorism. This, in turn, is likely to produce a counter-ferocity in the public. It seems to me that West Germany has so far shown remarkable restraint in the face of the stepped-up provocation.

Probably a more serious problem lies ahead, not only for Germany but for the world. It is disagreeable to be the bearer of bad news but it seems to me that we are in a count-down to a crisis that we are even more reluctant to face than the energy crisis: the time when terrorists will have nuclear bombs. This could bring about a quite new kind of world in a very short time.

Will they get them? The authoritative Mitre report (1977) sponsoded by the Ford Foundation (Ballinger Publishing Co.) noted that "the past few years have seen an upsurge in the size, sophistication and capabilities of terrorist groups." Plutonium, it says, "would be vulnerable to theft, diversion and misuse at all stages following its separation at reprocessing plants" (the kind of plants Jimmy Carter wants held up). Of course "less skilled terrorists" couldn't make a Grade A bomb "but even an inexpertly assembled terrorist weapon might well have a yield equivalent to a few hundred tons of chemical high explosive." Yes, it said, the threat "must be taken seriously."

The Office of Technological Assessment of Congress last April said that a small group including a "jack-of-all-trades" might put together a modest bomb if it had stolen the fissionable material. As to civil liberties, it noted, it would be hard to preserve them if a real threat of nuclear blackmail developed.

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Correspondence, *from page 7*

The neighborhood bully

To the editors:

It was good to see your editorial on the Federal Election Commission ("Auditing the FEC," *TNR*, Oct. 1). It's encouraging to know that someone outside of politics is watching the monster created in the name of "reform."

I was fascinated by the FEC's claim that it is short of auditors. Why, then, has it announced its intent to audit the books of our committee, which supported Gene McCarthy's campaign, filed one suit against us, and threatened to file another? Why has it filed suit against more than 30 candidates—but never against a winner or an incumbent?

The FEC is the neighborhood bully of American politics—picking on the little guys and running away when the real toughs come on the scene. Its danger is magnified because it is supported by so many thoughtless liberals. My thanks to *The New Republic* for refusing to join their ranks.

Mary Meehan
Committee for a Constitutional Presidency
Washington, DC

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Washington Diarist

Moral Rectitude

TNR's editorial on the Bakke case (October 15), taking a hard line against minority quotas and other "reverse discrimination" programs, did not persuade me. In fact, it reminded me of what Auberon Waugh wrote recently in the *Spectator* of London about the duty of the anonymous editorial writer: "by self-effacement and repetition of familiar sentiments he assures us that all news is ultimately boring, all opinion is commonplace and unimportant and there is a continuity in world affairs which reduces the mighty issues of the day to vulgar melodrama." I admire anyone who sees a genuine solution to the dilemma of affirmative action in a universal standard of "personal strength—pride, energy, enterprise, compassion"—and who truly believes that explicit preferential treatment for minorities is different from and morally inferior to "the understanding that these qualities are differently expressed in different cultures, and tested far more harshly in some parts of our society than in others."

Still, if anything could make me sympathize with Allan Bakke it would be the sight of Archibald Cox displaying his famous New England rectitudinal posture on the steps of the Supreme Court after arguing to the justices that people like Bakke should be denied a shot at medical school in order to make room for minority students. Even on TV, the reek of *noblesse oblige* was overpowering. Listening as the arguments inside were repeated for reporters, you couldn't help feeling that the values of open opportunity and reward of ambition that Bakke feels he is defending touch no personal chord inside Professor Cox, and departures from them strike no fear in him. He views the dispute from high above the meritocratic scramble—a position that is assured no matter how the Supreme Court balances the claims of the groups competing in the Bakke case. For the Archie Coxes of this world, "merit" still carries the Puritan sense of preordination. One's solemn duty in life is to display merit *ex post facto*, which is what Archie was doing at the Supreme Court the other day, reminding the middle orders of their higher duty.

The Wall Street Journal editorial page has seized upon the air bag as its symbol of unnecessary government interference in the private lives of America's citizens and large corporations. It reported gleefully a while ago that Joan Claybrook, head of the Highway Safety Administration, had "suppressed" (that is, not released) a report indicating that air bags may not work in some situations. "The tests, using dummies and cadavers in off-center frontal collisions, found that air bags would not have protected occupants against fatal injuries." Cadavers? I called the company that conducts these tests to find out (1) whether using cadavers in a test of fatality does not tend to prejudice the results ("My God, this man has died!"); (2) where they get the volunteers for these experiments; and (3) how I can will my body to science and still assure it of a more dignified fate than to be seated in a Chevrolet and driven into a brick wall. Mr. Dean Richmond of the Carlspan Corporation in Buffalo said the use of cadavers was the government's idea. "The government felt dummies were not fully representative of human beings, although they are quite sophisticated and cost $5000 each." And how much are the cadavers? "Oh, they're free. We get them from the local medical school—with the permission of the survivors of course. They've been donated for medical research. We have to exercise them a bit to make sure the bones are loose." After Carlspan is through with them the cadavers go back to the medical school for medical research. Thanks to the tremendous advances in auto safety since Ralph Nader burst on the scene a decade ago, almost all are returned in perfect condition.

Federal employees have had a triumphant month. On October 1 they received a 7.05 percent across-the-board pay increase. This is their annual "comparability" increase, intended to keep federal salaries in line with equivalent private jobs, an obscure standard but one which the government apparently feels it can compute to the hundredth of a percentage point. What private jobs, do you suppose, are comparable to those of the people who compute the standard of comparability? The other triumph was the apparent lobbying to death of a part of the Social Security reform bill that would have made participation in the Social Security system mandatory for government employees, just as it is for all the rest of us. I don't blame government employees for not wishing to participate in an arrangement by which their money supports today's retirees at a level it will be actuarially impossible to support people at when they themselves retire years from now. I would be especially reluctant if it meant giving up any part of the generous (and granite-secure) pension benefits government employees now enjoy. I do blame the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee for voting, 24-0, to oppose this element in the Ways and Means Committee's plan to bring Social Security at least part-way back to solvency. And I blame the House Democratic leadership for another magnificent defense of principle by caving in immediately to the campaign led by Representative Gladys Noon Spellman of Washington's Maryland suburbs. Government employees have an especially nice racket by which they take advantage of federal early-retirement provisions, then take a private job for long enough to collect Social Security as well as a federal pension when they turn 65.

The Washington Post has launched a new once-a-week section called *Weekend*, in rather blatant imitation of the *New York Times* section of the same name begun a couple years ago. In an apparent attempt to stave off criticism that the new section paints a picture of life in Washington (or at least life among readers of the *Post*) as filled with expensive restaurants, theater, shopping, interior decorating and other white affluent diversions, the very first issue contained a column devoted to the subject of how poor people spend their weekends. A "*Washington Post* survey" was taken of blacks making less than $10,000 a year. The astonishing conclusion? Those surveyed "seem to participate less in the activities that make weekends pleasant for most people."

M.E.K.

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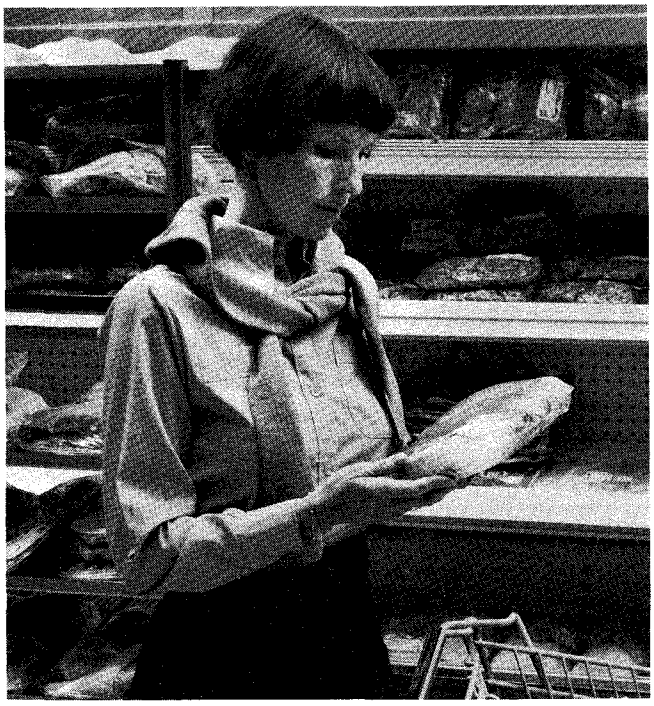

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